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CHLAMYDIA PROTEIN, GENE SEQUENCE AND USES THEREOF1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention generally relates to a high molecular weight ("HMW") protein of *Chlamydia*, the amino acid sequence thereof, and antibodies, including cytotoxic antibodies, that specifically bind the HMW protein. The invention further encompasses prophylactic and therapeutic compositions comprising the HMW protein, a fragment thereof, or an antibody that specifically binds the HMW protein or a portion thereof or the nucleotide sequence encoding the HMW protein or a fragment thereof, including vaccines. The invention additionally provides methods of preventing, treating or ameliorating disorders in mammals and birds related to *Chlamydia* infections and for inducing immune responses to *Chlamydia*. The invention further provides isolated nucleotide sequences and degenerate sequences encoding the HMW protein, vectors having said sequences, and host cells containing said vectors. Diagnostic methods and kits are also included.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Chlamydia are prevalent human pathogens causing disorders such as sexually transmitted diseases, respiratory diseases including pneumonia, neonatal conjunctivitis, and blindness. *Chlamydia* are obligate intracellular bacteria that infect the epithelial lining of the lung, conjunctivae or genital tract. The most common species of *Chlamydia* include *Chlamydia trachomatis*, *Chlamydia psittaci*, *Chlamydia pecorum* and *Chlamydia pneumoniae*. Recently, the newly designated species of *Chlamydia*, *C. pneumoniae* (formerly *C. trachomatis* TWAR), has been implicated as a major cause of epidemic human pneumonitis and perhaps may play a role in atherosclerosis.

There are currently 18 recognized *C. trachomatis* serovars, causing trachoma and a broad spectrum of sexually transmitted diseases: with the A, B and C serovars being most

frequently associated with trachoma, while the D-K serovars are the most common cause of genital infections.

C. trachomatis is the major cause of sexually transmitted disease in many industrialized countries, 5 including the United States. While the exact incidence of C. trachomatis infection in the U.S. is not known, current epidemiological studies indicate that more than 4 million chlamydial infections occur each year, compared to an estimated 2 million gonococcal infections. While all racial, 10 ethnic and socioeconomic groups are affected, the greatest prevalence of chlamydial infections occur among young, 12 to 20 year-old, sexually active individuals. Most genitourinary chlamydial infections are clinically asymptomatic. Prolonged carriage in both men and women is common. As many as 25% of 15 men and 75% of women diagnosed as having chlamydial infections have no overt signs of infection. As a consequence, these asymptomatic individuals constitute a large reservoir that can sustain transmission of the agent within the community.

20 Far from being benign, serious disease can develop from these infections including: urethritis, lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV), cervicitis, and epididymitis in males. Ascending infections from the endocervix commonly gives rise to endometritis, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and 25 salpingitis which can cause tubal occlusion and lead ultimately to infertility.

C. trachomatis infection of neonates results from perinatal exposure to the mother's infected cervix. Nearly 70% of neonates born vaginally to mothers with chlamydial 30 cervicitis become infected during delivery. The mucus membranes of the eye, oropharynx, urogenital tract and rectum are the primary sites of infection. Chlamydial conjunctivitis has become the most common form of ophthalmia neonatorum. Approximately 20-30% of exposed infants develop 35 inclusion conjunctivitis within 14 days of delivery even after receiving prophylaxis with either silver nitrate or antibiotic ointment. C. trachomatis is also the leading cause

of infant pneumonia in the United States. Nearly 10-20% of neonates delivered through an infected cervix will develop chlamydial pneumonia and require some type of medical intervention.

5 In developing countries, ocular infections of *C. trachomatis* cause trachoma, a chronic follicular conjunctivitis where repeated scar formation leads to distortion of the eyelids and eventual loss of sight. Trachoma is the world's leading cause of preventable 10 blindness. The World Health Organization estimates that over 500 million people worldwide, including about 150 million children, currently suffer from active trachoma and over 6 million people have been blinded by this disease.

In industrialized countries, the costs associated 15 with treating chlamydial infections are enormous. In the U.S., the annual cost of treating these diseases was estimated at \$2.5-3 billion in 1992 and has been projected to exceed \$8 billion by the year 2000.

One potential solution to this health crisis would 20 be an effective chlamydial vaccine. Several lines of evidence suggest that developing an effective vaccine is feasible.

Studies in both humans and primates have shown that short-term protective immunity to *C. trachomatis* can be 25 produced by vaccinating with whole *Chlamydia*. However, protection was characterized as short lived, serovar specific, and due to mucosal antibody. Additionally, in some vaccinees disease was exacerbated when these individuals became naturally infected with a serovar different from that 30 used for immunization. This adverse reaction was ultimately demonstrated to be due to a delayed-type hypersensitivity response. Thus, the need exists to develop a subunit-based chlamydial vaccine capable of producing an efficacious but nonsensitizing immune response. Such a subunit vaccine may 35 need to elicit both mucosal neutralizing secretory IgA antibody and/or cellular immune response to be efficacious.

Subunit vaccine development efforts to date have focused almost exclusively on the major outer membrane protein (MOMP). MOMP is an integral membrane protein of approximately 40 kDa in size and comprises up to about 60% of the infectious elementary body (EB) membrane protein (Caldwell, H.D., J.Kromhout, and L.Schachter. 1981. Infect. Immun., 31:1161-1176). MOMP imparts structural integrity to the extracellular EB and is thought to function as a porin-like molecule when the organism is growing intracellularly and is metabolically active. With the exception of four surface exposed variable domains (VDI-VDIV), MOMP is highly conserved among all 18 serovars. MOMP is highly immunogenic and can elicit a local neutralizing anti-Chlamydia antibody. However, problems exists with this approach.

To date, most MOMP-specific neutralizing epitopes that have been mapped are located within the VD regions and thus give rise only to serovar-specific antibody. Attempts to combine serovar-specific epitopes in various vaccine vectors (e.g. poliovirus) to generate broadly cross-reactive neutralizing antibodies have been only marginally successful (Murdin, A.D., H. Su, D.S. Manning, M.H. Klein, M.J. Parnell, and H.D. Caldwell. 1993. Infect. Immun., 61:4406-4414; Murdin, A.D., H. Su, M.H. Klein, and H.D. Caldwell. 1995. Infect. Immun., 63:1116-1121).

Two other major outer membrane proteins in *C. trachomatis*, the 60 kDa and 12 kDa cysteine-rich proteins, as well as the surface-exposed lipopolysaccharide, are highly immunogenic but, unlike MOMP, have not been shown to induce a neutralizing antibody (Cerrone et al., 1991, Infect. Immun., 59:79-90). Therefore, there remains a need for a novel subunit-based chlamydial vaccine.

3. SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of the present invention is to provide an isolated and substantially purified high molecular weight protein of a *Chlamydia* sp. ("HMW protein"), wherein the HMW protein has an apparent molecular weight of about 105-115

kDa, as determined by SDS-PAGE, or a fragment or analogue thereof. Preferably the HMW protein has substantially the amino acid sequence of any of SEQ ID Nos.: 2, 15 and 16. Preferred fragments of the HMW protein include SEQ ID Nos: 3, 5 17, and 25-37. As used herein, "substantially the sequence" is intended to mean that the sequence is at least 80%, more preferably at least 90% and most preferably at least 95% identical to the referenced sequence. Preferably, the HMW protein is an outer membrane protein. More preferably, the 10 outer membrane HMW protein is surface localized. Preferably, the HMW protein has a heparin binding domain. Preferably, the HMW Protein has a porin-like domain. It is intended that all species of *Chlamydia* are included in this invention, however preferred species include *Chlamydia trachomatis*, 15 *Chlamydia psittaci*, *Chlamydia percorum* and *Chlamydia pneumoniae*. The substantially purified HMW protein is at least 70 wt% pure, preferably at least about 90 wt% pure, and may be in the form of an aqueous solution thereof.

Also included in this invention are recombinant 20 forms of the HMW protein, wherein in transformed *E. coli* cells, the expressed recombinant form of the HMW protein has an apparent molecular weight of about 105-115 kDa, as determined by SDS-PAGE, or a fragment or analogue thereof. The term HMW-derived polypeptide is intended to include 25 fragments of the HMW protein; variants of wild-type HMW protein or fragment thereof, containing one or more amino acid deletions, insertions or substitutions; and chimeric proteins comprising a heterologous polypeptide fused to the C-terminal or N-terminal or internal segment of a whole or a 30 portion of the HMW protein.

As used herein and in the claims, the term "HMW protein" refers to a native purified or recombinant purified high molecular weight protein of a species of *Chlamydia* wherein the apparent molecular weight (as determined by SDS-35 PAGE) is about 105-115 kDa. As used herein and in the claims, the term "rHMW protein" refers to recombinant HMW protein.

Another object of the present invention is to provide an isolated substantially pure nucleic acid molecule encoding a HMW protein or a fragment or an analogue thereof. Preferred is the nucleic acid sequence wherein the encoded 5 HMW protein comprises the amino acid sequence of any of SEQ ID Nos.: 2, 15 and 16, or a fragment thereof, particularly SEQ ID Nos.: 3, 17, 25-37. Also included is an isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a DNA sequence of any of SEQ ID Nos.: 1, 23-24 or a complementary sequence thereof; a 10 fragment of the HMW DNA sequence having the nucleic acid sequence of any of SEQ ID Nos.: 4-14, 18-22 or the complimentary sequence thereto; and a nucleic acid sequence which hybridizes under stringent conditions to any one of the sequences described above. The nucleic acid that hybridizes 15 under stringent condition preferably has a sequence identity of about 70 % with any of the sequences identified above, more preferably about 90 %.

The production and use of derivatives and analogues of the HMW protein are within the scope of the present 20 invention. In a specific embodiment, the derivative or analogue is functionally active, i.e., capable of exhibiting one or more functional activities associated with a full-length, wild-type HMW protein. As one example, such derivatives or analogues which have the desired 25 immunogenicity or antigenicity can be used, for example, in immunoassays, for immunization, etc. A specific embodiment relates to a HMW fragment that can be bound by an anti-HMW antibody. Derivatives or analogues of HMW can be tested for the desired activity by procedures known in the art.

30 In particular, HMW derivatives can be made by altering HMW sequences by substitutions, additions or deletions that provide for functionally equivalent molecules. Due to the degeneracy of nucleotide coding sequences, other DNA sequences which encode substantially the same amino acid 35 sequence as a HMW gene may be used in the practice of the present invention. These include but are not limited to nucleotide sequences comprising all or portions of genes

which are altered by the substitution of different codons that encode a functionally equivalent amino acid residue within the sequence, thus producing a silent change.

Likewise, the HMW derivatives of the invention include, but

5 are not limited to, those containing, as a primary amino acid sequence, all or part of the amino acid sequence of a HMW protein including altered sequences in which functionally equivalent amino acid residues are substituted for residues within the sequence resulting in a silent change. For

10 example, one or more amino acid residues within the sequence can be substituted by another amino acid of a similar polarity which acts as a functional equivalent, resulting in a silent alteration. Substitutes for an amino acid within the sequence may be selected from other members of the class

15 to which the amino acid belongs. For example, the nonpolar (hydrophobic) amino acids include alanine, leucine, isoleucine, valine, proline, phenylalanine, tryptophan and methionine. The polar neutral amino acids include glycine, serine, threonine, cysteine, tyrosine, asparagine, and

20 glutamine. The positively charged (basic) amino acids include arginine, lysine and histidine. The negatively charged (acidic) amino acids include aspartic acid and glutamic acid.

In a specific embodiment of the invention, proteins

25 consisting of or comprising a fragment of a HMW protein consisting of at least 6 (continuous) amino acids of the HMW protein is provided. In other embodiments, the fragment consists of at least 7 to 50 amino acids of the HMW protein. In specific embodiments, such fragments are not larger than

30 35, 100 or 200 amino acids. Derivatives or analogues of HMW include but are not limited to those molecules comprising regions that are substantially homologous to HMW or fragments thereof (e.g., in various embodiments, at least 60% or 70% or 80% or 90% or 95% identity over an amino acid sequence of

35 identical size or when compared to an aligned sequence in which the alignment is done by a computer homology program known in the art) or whose encoding nucleic acid is capable

of hybridizing to a coding HMW sequence, under stringent, moderately stringent, or nonstringent conditions.

The HMW derivatives and analogues of the invention can be produced by various methods known in the art. The 5 manipulations which result in their production can occur at the gene or protein level. For example, the cloned HMW gene sequence can be modified by any of numerous strategies known in the art (Sambrook et al., 1989, Molecular Cloning, A Laboratory Manual, 2d Ed., Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory 10 Press, Cold Spring Harbor, New York). The sequence can be cleaved at appropriate sites with restriction endonuclease(s), followed by further enzymatic modification if desired, isolated, and ligated *in vitro*. In the production of the gene encoding a derivative or analogue of 15 HMW, care should be taken to ensure that the modified gene remains within the same translational reading frame as HMW, uninterrupted by translational stop signals, in the gene region where the desired HMW activity is encoded.

Additionally, the HMW-encoding nucleic acid 20 sequence can be mutated *in vitro* or *in vivo*, to create and/or destroy translation, initiation, and/or termination sequences, or to create variations in coding regions and/or form new restriction endonuclease sites or destroy preexisting ones, to facilitate further *in vitro* 25 modification. Any technique for mutagenesis known in the art can be used, including but not limited to, chemical mutagenesis, *in vitro* site-directed mutagenesis (Hutchinson, C., et al., 1978, J. Biol. Chem 253:6551), use of TAB® linkers (Pharmacia), etc.

30 Manipulations of the HMW sequence may also be made at the protein level. Included within the scope of the invention are HMW protein fragments or other derivatives or analogues which are differentially modified during or after translation, e.g., by glycosylation, lipidation, acetylation, 35 phosphorylation, amidation, derivatization by known protecting/blocking groups, proteolytic cleavage, linkage to an antibody molecule or other cellular ligand, etc. Any of

numerous chemical modifications may be carried out by known techniques, including but not limited to specific chemical cleavage by cyanogen bromide, trypsin, chymotrypsin, papain, V8 protease, NaBH₄; acetylation, formylation, oxidation,

5 reduction; metabolic synthesis in the presence of tunicamycin; etc.

In addition, analogues and derivatives of HMW can be chemically synthesized. For example, a peptide corresponding to a portion of a HMW protein which comprises 10 the desired domain, or which mediates the desired activity *in vitro*, can be synthesized by use of a peptide synthesizer. Furthermore, if desired, nonclassical amino acids or chemical amino acid analogues can be introduced as a substitution or addition into the HMW sequence. Non-classical amino acids 15 include but are not limited to the D-isomers of the common amino acids, α -amino isobutyric acid, 4-aminobutyric acid, Abu, 2-amino butyric acid, γ -Abu, ϵ -Ahx, 6-amino hexanoic acid, Aib, 2-amino isobutyric acid, 3-amino propionic acid, ornithine, norleucine, norvaline, hydroxyproline, sarcosine, 20 citrulline, cysteic acid, t-butylglycine, t-butylalanine, phenylglycine, cyclohexylalanine, β -alanine, fluoro-amino acids, designer amino acids such as β -methyl amino acids, α -methyl amino acids, α -methyl amino acids, and amino acid analogues in general. Furthermore, the amino acid can be D 25 (dextrorotary) or L (levorotary).

Another object of the invention is to provide a recombinant expression vector adapted for transformation of a host or for delivery of a HMW protein to a host comprising the nucleic acid molecule of SEQ ID No.: 1, 23 or 24 or any 30 fragment thereof. Preferably, the recombinant expression vector is adapted for transformation of a host and comprises an expression means operatively coupled to the nucleic acid molecule for expression by the host of said HMW protein or the fragment or analogue thereof. More preferred is the 35 expression vector wherein the expression means includes a nucleic acid portion encoding a leader sequence for secretion from the host or an affinity domain coupled to either the N-

or C-terminus of the protein or the fragment or analogue thereof.

A further aspect of the invention includes a transformed host cell containing an expression vector 5 described above and the recombinant HMW protein or fragment or analogue thereof producible by the transformed host cell.

Still a further aspect of the invention is directed to a HMW protein recognizable by an antibody preparation that specifically binds to a peptide having the amino acid 10 sequence of SEQ ID No. 2, 15-16 or a fragment or conservatively substituted analogue thereof.

Antigenic and/or immunogenic compositions are another aspect of the invention wherein the compositions comprise at least one component selected from the following 15 group:

- a) a HMW protein, wherein the molecular weight is about 105-115 kDa, as determined by SDS-PAGE, or a fragment or analogue thereof;
- b) an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a HMW protein, or a fragment or analogue thereof;
- c) an isolated nucleic acid molecule having the sequence of SEQ ID Nos. 1, 22, 23 or 24, the complimentary sequence thereto or a nucleic acid sequence which hybridizes under stringent conditions thereto or fragment thereof;
- d) an isolated recombinant HMW protein, or fragment or analogue thereof, producible in a transformed host comprising an expression vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule as defined in b) or c) and expression means operatively coupled to the nucleic acid molecule for expression by the host of said HMW protein or the fragment or analogue thereof;

- e) a recombinant vector comprising a nucleic acid encoding a HMW protein or fragment or analogue thereof;
- f) a transformed cell comprising the vector of e) and optionally an adjuvant, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent therefor, said composition producing an immune response when administered to a host.

5 Preferred adjuvants include cholera holotoxin or subunits, *E. coli* heat labile holotoxin, subunits and mutant forms thereof, alum, QS21, and MPL. Particularly, preferred are alum, LTR192G, mLT and QS21.

10 Also included are methods for producing an immune response in a mammal or a bird comprising administering to 15 said mammal, an effective amount of the antigenic or the immunogenic composition described above.

Another aspect of the invention is directed to antisera raised against the antigenic or immunogenic composition of the invention, and antibodies present in the 20 antisera that specifically bind a HMW protein or a fragment or analogue thereof. Preferably the antibodies bind a HMW protein having the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID Nos.: 2, 15-16 or fragment or a conservatively substituted analogue thereof. Also included are monoclonal antibodies that 25 specifically bind a HMW protein or a fragment or analogue thereof.

A further aspect of the invention includes pharmaceutical and vaccine compositions comprising an effective amount of at least one component selected from the 30 following group:

- a) a HMW protein, wherein the isolated protein molecular weight is about 105-115 kDa, as determined by SDS-PAGE, or a fragment or analogue thereof;
- b) an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a HMW protein, or a fragment or analogue thereof;

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-)
- 5 c) an isolated nucleic acid molecule having the sequence of SEQ ID Nos.: 1, 22, 23 or 24 the complimentary sequence thereto or a nucleic acid sequence which hybridizes under stringent conditions thereto or a fragment thereof;
- 10 d) an isolated recombinant HMW protein, or fragment or analogue thereof producible in a transformed host comprising an expression vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule as defined in b) or c) and expression means operatively coupled to the nucleic acid molecule for expression by the host of said HMW protein of a *Chlamydia* species or the fragment or analogue thereof;
- 15 e) a recombinant vector, comprising a nucleic acid encoding a HMW protein or fragment or analogue thereof;
- 20 f) a transformed cell comprising the vector of e),
- g) antibodies that specifically bind the component of a), b), c), d) or e), and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent therefor.

Preferred are vaccine compositions which are effective at the mucosal level.

25 The invention also includes a diagnostic reagent which may include any one or more of the above mentioned aspects, such as the native HMW protein, the recombinant HMW protein, the nucleic acid molecule, the immunogenic composition, the antigenic composition, the antisera, the 30 antibodies, the vector comprising the nucleic acid, and the transformed cell comprising the vector.

Methods and diagnostic kits for detecting *Chlamydia* or anti-*Chlamydia* antibodies in a test sample are also included, wherein the methods comprise the steps of:

- 35 a) contacting said sample with an antigenic composition comprising *Chlamydia* HMW protein or a fragment or analogue thereof or

- immunogenic composition or antibodies thereto to form Chlamydia antigen: anti-Chlamydia antibody immunocomplexes, and further,
- 5 b) detecting the presence of or measuring the amount of said immunocomplexes formed during step a) as an indication of the presence of said Chlamydia or anti-Chlamydia antibodies in the test sample.

The diagnostic kits for detecting Chlamydia or antibodies thereto comprise antibodies, or an antigenic or immunogenic composition comprising Chlamydia HMW protein or a fragment or analogue thereof, a container means for contacting said antibodies or composition with a test sample suspected of having anti-Chlamydia antibodies or Chlamydia and reagent

10 means for detecting or measuring Chlamydia antigen: anti-Chlamydia antibody immunocomplexes formed between said antigenic or immunogenic composition or said antibodies and said test sample.

15

A further aspect of the present invention provides methods for determining the presence of nucleic acids encoding a HMW protein or a fragment or analogue thereof in a test sample, comprising the steps of:

- 20 a) contacting the test sample with the nucleic acid molecule provided herein to produce duplexes comprising the nucleic acid molecule and any said nucleic acid molecule encoding the HMW protein in the test sample and specifically hybridizable therewith; and
- 25 b) determining the production of duplexes.

30 The present invention also provides a diagnostic kit and reagents therefor, for determining the presence of nucleic acid encoding a HMW protein or fragment or analogue thereof in a sample, comprising:

- 35 a) the nucleic acid molecule as provided herein;
- b) means for contacting the nucleic acid with the test sample to produce duplexes comprising the nucleic acid molecule and any said nucleic

acid molecule encoding the HMW protein in the test sample and specifically hybridizable therewith; and

- 5 c) means for determining the production of duplexes.

Also included in this invention are methods of preventing, treating or ameliorating disorders related to *Chlamydia* in an animal including mammals and birds in need of such treatment comprising administering an effective amount
10 of the pharmaceutical or vaccine composition of the invention. Preferred disorders include a *Chlamydia* bacterial infection, trachoma, conjunctivitis, urethritis, lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV), cervicitis, epididymitis, or endometritis, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), salpingitis,
15 tubal occlusion, infertility, cervical cancer, and atherosclerosis. Preferred vaccine or pharmaceutical compositions include those formulated for *in vivo* administration to a host to confer protection against disease or treatment therefor caused by a species of *Chlamydia*. Also
20 preferred are compositions formulated as a microparticle, capsule, liposome preparation or emulsion.

4. ABBREVIATIONS

25	anti-HMW	=	HMW polypeptide antibody or antiserum
	ATCC	=	American Type Culture Collection
	immuno-reactive	=	capable of provoking a cellular or humoral immune response
30	kDa	=	kilodaltons
	OG	=	n-octyl β -D-glucopyranoside or octyl glucoside
	OMP	=	outer membrane protein
	OMPs	=	outer membrane proteins
35	PBS	=	phosphate buffered saline
	PAGE	=	polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis

polypeptide	=	a peptide of any length, preferably one having ten or more amino acid residues
SDS	=	sodium dodecylsulfate
5 SDS-PAGE	=	sodium dodecylsulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis

Nucleotide or nucleic acid sequences defined herein are represented by one-letter symbols for the bases as follows:

- 10 A (adenine)
- C (cytosine)
- G (guanine)
- T (thymine)
- U (uracil)
- 15 M (A or C)
- R (A or G)
- W (A or T/U)
- S (C or G)
- Y (C or T/U)
- 20 K (G or T/U)
- V (A or C or G; not T/U)
- H (A or C or T/U; not G)
- D (A or G or T/U; not C)
- B (C or G or T/U; not A)
- 25 N (A or C or G or T/U) or (unknown)

Peptide and polypeptide sequences defined herein are represented by one-letter symbols for amino acid residues as follows:

- 30 A (alanine)
- R (arginine)
- N (asparagine)
- D (aspartic acid)
- C (cysteine)
- 35 Q (glutamine)
- E (glutamic acid)

G (glycine)
H (histidine)
I (isoleucine)
L (leucine)
5 K (lysine)
M (methionine)
F (phenylalanine)
P (proline)
S (serine)
10 T (threonine)
W (tryptophan)
Y (tyrosine)
V (valine)
X (unknown)

15

The present invention may be more fully understood by reference to the following detailed description of the invention, non-limiting examples of specific embodiments of the invention and the appended figures.

20

5. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Figure 1: Western blot analysis of *C. trachomatis* L₂ elementary bodies (EBs).

25

Gradient purified EBs were solubilized in standard Laemmli SDS-PAGE sample buffer containing 2-mercaptoethanol, boiled for ~3 minutes and loaded onto a 4-12% Tris-glycine gradient gel containing SDS and electrophoresed at 100V. Immediately following electrophoresis, proteins were electroblotted onto PVDF membranes at 4°C for ~2.5 hours at ~50V. The blocked membrane was probed using a 1/5,000 dilution of anti-rHMWP⁺ antibody (K196) for 1.5 hours at room temperature. Following washing, the membrane was treated with a 1/5,000 dilution of a goat

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anti-rabbit IgG antibody conjugated to HRP for 1 hour at room temperature. The blot was developed using a standard TMB substrate system.

5 Three immunoreactive bands detected in EBs and RBs. Dot indicates HMW Protein of about 105-115 kDa.

10 **Figure 2.** Consensus Nucleic Acid Sequence encoding the open reading frame of the HMW protein from *C. trachomatis* LGV L₂.

15 **Figure 3.** Deduced Amino Acid Sequence of the HMW protein from the PCR open reading frame from *C. trachomatis* LGV L₂.

20 **Figure 4.** SDS-PAGE of partially purified recombinant HMW protein from *C. trachomatis* LGVL₂ expressed in *E. coli*. Counterstained and prestained SDS-PAGE standards were used as molecular weight markers. The positions of the molecular weight markers in the gel are noted on the left and right side of the figure by lines to the molecular weights (kDa) of some of the markers. See Text Example 10 for details.

25 **Lane A:** Mark 12 Wide Range Molecular Weight Markers (Novex); myosin, 200 Kdal; B-galactosidase, 116.3 Kdal; phosphorylase B, 97.4 Kdal; bovine serum albumin, 66.3 Kdal.

Lane B: *C. trachomatis* L2 recombinant HMWP.

30 **Lane C:** SeeBlue Prestained Molecular Weight markers (Novex); myosin, 250 Kdal; bovine serum albumin, 98 Kdal; glutamic dehydrogenase, 64 Kdal.

Figure 5. Map of plasmids pAH306, pAH310, pAH312, pAH316 and the PCR open reading frame.

35 **Figure 6.** Predicted amino acid sequences, of HMW Protein for *C. trachomatis* L₂, B, and F. The *C. trachomatis* L2 sequence is given in the top line and begins with the first residue of

th mature protein, E. Potential eucaryotic N-glycosylation sequences are underlined. A hydrophobic helical region flanked by proline-rich segments and of suitable length to span the lipid bilayer is underlined and enclosed in brackets. Amino acid differences identified in the B and F serovars are designated below the L₂ HMWP protein sequence.

5 **Figure 7**
10 Indirect fluorescence antibody staining of *C. trachomatis* N11 (serovar F) inclusion bodies using anti-rHMWP' antibody.

15 Panel A: Post-immunization sera from rabbit K196. Chlamydia inclusion bodies are stained yellow.

Panel B: Pre-immunization sera from rabbit K196.

6. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The term "antigens" and its related term 20 "antigenic" as used herein and in the claims refers to a substance that binds specifically to an antibody or T-cell receptor. Preferably said antigens are immunogenic.

The term "immunogenic" as used herein and in the claims refers to the ability to induce an immune response, 25 e.g., an antibody and/or a cellular immune response in a animal, preferably a mammal or a bird.

The term "host" as used herein and in the claims refers to either *in vivo* in an animal or *in vitro* in mammalian cell cultures.

30 An effective amount of the antigenic, immunogenic, pharmaceutical, including, but not limited to vaccine, composition of the invention should be administered, in which "effective amount" is defined as an amount that is sufficient to produce a desired prophylactic, therapeutic or 35 ameliorative response in a subject, including but not limited to an immune response. The amount needed will vary depending upon the immunogenicity of the HMW protein, fragment, nucleic

acid or derivative used, and the species and weight of the subject to be administered, but may be ascertained using standard techniques. The composition elicits an immune response in a subject which produces antibodies, including 5 anti-HMW protein antibodies and antibodies that are opsonizing or bactericidal. In preferred, non-limiting, embodiments of the invention, an effective amount of a composition of the invention produces an elevation of antibody titer to at least three times the antibody titer 10 prior to administration. In a preferred, specific, non-limiting embodiment of the invention, approximately 0.01 to 2000 µg and preferably 0.1 to 500 µg are administered to a host. Preferred are compositions additionally comprising an adjuvant.

15 Immunogenic, antigenic, pharmaceutical and vaccine compositions may be prepared as injectables, as liquid solutions or emulsions. The HMW protein may be mixed with one or more pharmaceutically acceptable excipient which is compatible with the HMW protein. Such excipients may 20 include, water, saline, dextrose, glycerol, ethanol, and combinations thereof.

Immunogenic, antigenic, pharmaceutical and vaccine compositions may further contain one or more auxiliary substance, such as wetting or emulsifying agents, pH 25 buffering agents, or adjuvants to enhance the effectiveness thereof. Immunogenic, antigenic, pharmaceutical and vaccine compositions may be administered parenterally, by injection, subcutaneously or intramuscularly.

Alternatively, the immunogenic, antigenic, 30 pharmaceutical and vaccine compositions formed according to the present invention, may be formulated and delivered in a manner to evoke an immune response at mucosal surfaces. Thus, the immunogenic, antigenic, pharmaceutical and vaccine compositions may be administered to mucosal surfaces by, for 35 example, the nasal, oral (intragastric), ocular, bronchiolar, intravaginal or intrarectal routes. Alternatively, other modes of administration including suppositories and oral

formulations may be desirable. For suppositories, binders and carriers may include, for example, polyalkalene glycols or triglycerides. Oral formulations may include normally employed incipients such as, for example, pharmaceutical 5 grades of saccharine, cellulose and magnesium carbonate. These compositions can take the form of solutions, suspensions, tablets, pills, capsules, sustained release formulations or powders and contain about 0.001 to 95% of the HMW protein. The immunogenic, antigenic, pharmaceutical and 10 vaccine compositions are administered in a manner compatible with the dosage formulation, and in such amount as will be therapeutically effective, protective or immunogenic.

Further, the immunogenic, antigenic, pharmaceutical and vaccine compositions may be used in combination with or 15 conjugated to one or more targeting molecules for delivery to specific cells of the immune system, such as the mucosal surface. Some examples include but are not limited to vitamin B12, bacterial toxins or fragments thereof, monoclonal antibodies and other specific targeting lipids, 20 proteins, nucleic acids or carbohydrates.

The quantity to be administered depends on the subject to be treated, including, for example, the capacity of the individual's immune system to synthesize antibodies, and if needed, to produce a cell-mediated immune response. 25 Precise amounts of active ingredient required to be administered depend on the judgment of the practitioner. However, suitable dosage ranges are readily determinable by one skilled in the art and may be of the order of 0.1 to 1000 micrograms of the HMW protein, fragment or analogue thereof. 30 Suitable regimes for initial administration and booster doses are also variable, but may include an initial administration followed by subsequent administrations. The dose may also depend on the route(s) of administration and will vary according to the size of the host.

35 The concentration of the HMW protein in an antigenic, immunogenic or pharmaceutical composition according to the invention is in general about 0.001 to 95%.

A vaccine which contains antigenic material of only one pathogen is a monovalent vaccine. Vaccines which contain antigenic material of several pathogens are combined vaccines and also belong to the present invention. Such combined 5 vaccines contain, for example, material from various pathogens or from various strains of the same pathogen, or from combinations of various pathogens.

The antigenic, immunogenic or pharmaceutical preparations, including vaccines, may comprise as the 10 immunostimulating material a nucleotide vector comprising at least a portion of the gene encoding the HMW protein, or the at least a portion of the gene may be used directly for immunization.

To efficiently induce humoral immune responses 15 (HIR) and cell-mediated immunity (CMI), immunogens are typically emulsified in adjuvants. Immunogenicity can be significantly improved if the immunogen is co-administered with an adjuvant. Adjuvants may act by retaining the immunogen locally near the site of administration to produce 20 a depot effect facilitating a slow, sustained release of antigen to cells of the immune system. Adjuvants can also attract cells of the immune system to an immunogen depot and stimulate such cells to elicit immune responses.

Many adjuvants are toxic, inducing granulomas, 25 acute and chronic inflammations (Freund's complete adjuvant, FCA), cytolysis (saponins and Pluronic polymers) and pyrogenicity, arthritis and anterior uveitis (LPS and MDP). Although FCA is an excellent adjuvant and widely used in research, it is not licensed for use in human or veterinary 30 vaccines because of its toxicity.

Desirable characteristics of ideal adjuvants include:

- (1) lack of toxicity;
- (2) ability to stimulate a long-lasting immune 35 response;
- (3) simplicity of manufacture and stability in long-term storage;

- (4) ability to elicit either CMI or HIR or both to antigens administered by various routes, if required;
- (5) synergy with other adjuvants;
- (6) capability of selectively interacting with populations of antigen presenting cells (APC);
- 5 (7) ability to specifically elicit appropriate T_H1 or T_H2 cell-specific immune responses; and
- (8) ability to selectively increase appropriate antibody isotype levels (for example, IgA) against antigens.

10 Immunostimulatory agents or adjuvants have been used for many years to improve the host immune responses to, for example, vaccines. Intrinsic adjuvants, such as lipopolysaccharides, normally are the components of the killed or attenuated bacteria used as vaccines. Extrinsic 15 adjuvants are immunomodulators which are typically non-covalently linked to antigens and are formulated to enhance the host immune responses. Thus, adjuvants have been identified that enhance the immune response to antigens delivered parenterally. Aluminum hydroxide and aluminum 20 phosphate (collectively commonly referred to as alum) are routinely used as adjuvants in human and veterinary vaccines. The efficacy of alum in increasing antibody responses to diphtheria and tetanus toxoids is well established and a HBsAg vaccine has been adjuvanted with alum.

25 Other extrinsic adjuvants may include saponins complexed to membrane protein antigens (immune stimulating complexes), pluronic polymers with mineral oil, killed mycobacteria in mineral oil, Freund's complete adjuvant, bacterial products, such as muramyl dipeptide (MDP) and 30 lipopolysaccharide (LPS), as well as lipid A, and liposomes.

International Patent Application, PCT/US95/09005 incorporated herein by reference describes mutated forms of heat labile toxin of enterotoxigenic *E. coli* ("mLT"). U.S. Patent 5,057,540, incorporated herein by reference, describes 35 the adjuvant, Qs21, an HPLC purified non-toxic fraction of a saponin from the bark of the South American tree Quiliaja

saponaria molina 3D-MPL is described in great Britain Patent 2,220,211, and is incorporated herein by reference.

U.S. Patent No. 4,855,283 granted to Lockhoff et al on August 8, 1989 which is incorporated herein by reference, 5 teaches glycolipid analogues including N-glycosylamides, N-glycosylureas and N-glycosylcarbamates, each of which is substituted in the sugar residue by an amino acid, as immuno-modulators or adjuvants. Lockhoff reported that N-glycospopholipids and glycoglycerolipids, are capable of 10 eliciting strong immune responses in both herpes simplex virus vaccine and pseudorabies virus vaccine. Some glycolipids have been synthesized from long chain-alkylamines and fatty acids that are linked directly with the sugars through the anomeric carbon atom, to mimic the functions of 15 the naturally occurring lipid residues.

U.S. Patent No. 4,258,029 granted to Moloney, incorporated herein by reference thereto, teaches that octadecyl tyrosine hydrochloride (OTH) functioned as an adjuvant when complexed with tetanus toxoid and formalin 20 inactivated type I, II and III poliomyelitis virus vaccine. Lipidation of synthetic peptides has also been used to increase their immunogenicity.

Therefore, according to the invention, the immunogenic, antigenic, pharmaceutical, including vaccine, 25 compositions comprising a HMW protein, or a fragment or derivative thereof or a HMW encoding nucleic acid or fragment thereof or vector expressing the same, may further comprise an adjuvant, such as, but not limited to alum, mLT, QS21 and all those listed above. Preferably, the adjuvant is selected 30 from alum, LT, 3D-mPL, or Bacille Calmette-Guerine (BCG) and mutated or modified forms of the above, particularly mLT and LTR192G. The compositions of the present invention may also further comprise a suitable pharmaceutical carrier, including but not limited to saline, bicarbonate, dextrose or other 35 aqueous solution. Other suitable pharmaceutical carriers are described in Remington's Pharmaceutical Sciences, Mack

Publishing Company, a standard reference text in this field, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

Immunogenic, antigenic and pharmaceutical, including vaccine, compositions may be administered in a 5 suitable, nontoxic pharmaceutical carrier, may be comprised in microcapsules, and/or may be comprised in a sustained release implant.

Immunogenic, antigenic and pharmaceutical, including vaccine, compositions may desirably be administered 10 at several intervals in order to sustain antibody levels, and/or may be used in conjunction with other bacteriocidal or bacteriostatic methods.

As used herein and in the claims, "antibodies" of the invention may be obtained by any conventional methods 15 known to those skilled in the art, such as but not limited to the methods described in Antibodies A Laboratory Manual (E. Harlow, D. Lane, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 1989) which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. The term "antibodies" is intended to include all forms, such 20 as but not limited to polyclonal, monoclonal, purified IgG, IgM, IgA and fragments thereof, including but not limited to fragments such as Fv, single chain Fv (scFv), F(ab')₂, Fab fragments (Harlow and Leon, 1988, Antibody, Cold Spring Harbor); single chain antibodies (U.S. Patent No. 4,946,778) 25 chimeric or humanized antibodies (Morrison et al., 1984, Proc. Nat'l Acad. Sci. USA 81:6851); Neuberger et al., 1984, Nature 81:6851) and complementary determining regions (CDR), (see Verhoeven and Windust, in Molecular Immunology 2ed., by B.D. Hames and D.M. Glover, IRL Press, Oxford University 30 Press, 1996, at pp. 283-325), etc.

In general, an animal (a wide range of vertebrate species can be used, the most common being mice, rats, guinea pig, bovine, pig, hamsters, sheep, birds and rabbits) is immunized with the HMW protein or nucleic acid sequence or 35 immunogenic fragment or derivative thereof of the present invention in the absence or presence of an adjuvant or any agent that enhances the immunogen's effectiveness and boosted

at regular intervals. The animal serum is assayed for the presence of desired antibody by any convenient method. The serum or blood of said animal can be used as the source of polyclonal antibodies.

5 For monoclonal antibodies, animals are treated as described above. When an acceptable antibody titre is detected, the animal is euthanized and the spleen is aseptically removed for fusion. The spleen cells are mixed with a specifically selected immortal myeloma cell line, and the 10 mixture is then exposed to an agent, typically polyethylene glycol or the like, which promotes the fusion of cells. Under these circumstances fusion takes place in a random selection and a fused cell mixture together with unfused cells of each type is the resulting product. The myeloma 15 cell lines that are used for fusion are specifically chosen such that, by the use of selection media, such as HAT: hypoxanthine, aminopterin, and thymidine, the only cells to persist in culture from the fusion mixture are those that are hybrids between cells derived from the immunized donor and 20 the myeloma cells. After fusion, the cells are diluted and cultured in the selective media. The culture media is screened for the presence of antibody having desired specificity towards the chosen antigen. Those cultures containing the antibody of choice are cloned by limiting 25 dilution until it can be adduced that the cell culture is single cell in origin.

Antigens, Immunogens and Immunoassays

The HMW protein or nucleic acid encoding same, and 30 fragments thereof are useful as an antigen or immunogen for the generation of anti-HMW protein antibodies or as an antigen in immunoassays including enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISA), radioimmunoassays (RIA) and other non-enzyme linked antibody binding assays or procedures known in the art 35 for the detection of anti-bacterial, anti-Chlamydia, and anti-HMW protein antibodies. In ELISA assays, the HMW protein is immobilized onto a selected surface, for example,

a surface capable of binding proteins such as the wells of a polystyrene microtiter plate. After washing to remove incompletely absorbed HMW protein, a nonspecific protein solution that is known to be antigenically neutral with regard to the test sample may be bound to the selected surface. This allows for blocking of nonspecific absorption sites on the immobilizing surface and thus reduces the background caused by nonspecific bindings of antisera onto the surface.

10 The immobilizing surface is then contacted with a sample, such as clinical or biological materials, to be tested in a manner conducive to immune complex (antigen/antibody) formation. This may include diluting the sample with diluents, such as solutions of bovine gamma 15 globulin (BGG) and/or phosphate buffered saline (PBS)/Tween. The sample is then allowed to incubate for from 2 to 4 hours, at temperatures such as of the order of about 20° to 37°C. Following incubation, the sample-contacted surface is washed to remove non-immunocomplexed material. The washing 20 procedure may include washing with a solution, such as PBS/Tween or a borate buffer. Following formation of specific immunocomplexes between the test sample and the bound HMW protein, and subsequent washing, the occurrence, and even amount, of immunocomplex formation may be determined 25 by subjecting the immunocomplex to a second antibody having specificity for the first antibody. If the test sample is of human origin, the second antibody is an antibody having specificity for human immunoglobulins and in general IgG.

To provide detecting means, the second antibody may 30 have an associated activity such as an enzymatic activity that will generate, for example, a color development upon incubating with an appropriate chromogenic substrate. Detection may then be achieved by detecting color generation. Quantification may then be achieved by measuring the degree 35 of color generation using, for example, a visible spectrophotometer and comparing to an appropriate standard.

Any other detecting means known to those skilled in the art
are included.

Another embodiment includes diagnostic kits comprising all of the essential reagents required to perform 5 a desired immunoassay according to the present invention. The diagnostic kit may be presented in a commercially packaged form as a combination of one or more containers holding the necessary reagents. Such a kit may comprise HMW protein or nucleic acid encoding same or fragment thereof, a 10 monoclonal or polyclonal antibody of the present invention in combination with several conventional kit components. Conventional kit components will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art and are disclosed in numerous publications, including Antibodies A Laboratory Manual (E. 15 Harlow, D. Lane, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 1989) which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. Conventional kit components may include such items as, for example, microtitre plates, buffers to maintain the pH of the assay mixture (such as, but not limited to Tris, HEPES, 20 etc.), conjugated second antibodies, such as peroxidase conjugated anti-mouse IgG (or any anti-IgG to the animal from which the first antibody was derived) and the like, and other standard reagents.

25 Nucleic Acids and Uses Thereof

The nucleotide sequences of the present invention, including DNA and RNA and comprising a sequence encoding the HMW protein or a fragment or analogue thereof, may be synthesized using methods known in the art, such as using 30 conventional chemical approaches or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) amplification using convenient pairs of oligonucleotide primers and ligase chain reaction using a battery of contiguous oligonucleotides. The sequences also allow for the identification and cloning of the HMW protein gene from 35 any species of *Chlamydia*, for instance for screening chlamydial genomic libraries or expression libraries.

The nucleotide sequences encoding the HMW protein of the present invention are useful for their ability to selectively form duplex molecules with complementary stretches of other protein genes. Depending on the 5 application, a variety of hybridization conditions may be employed to achieve varying sequence identities. In specific aspects, nucleic acids are provided which comprise a sequence complementary to at least 10, 15, 25, 50, 100, 200 or 250 nucleotides of the HMW protein gene (Figure 2). In specific 10 embodiments, nucleic acids which hybridize to an HMW protein nucleic acid (e.g. having sequence SEQ ID NO: 1, 23 or 24) under annealing conditions of low, moderate or high stringency conditions.

For a high degree of selectivity, relatively 15 stringent conditions are used to form the duplexes, such as, by way of example and not limitation, low salt and/or high temperature conditions, such as provided by 0.02 M to 0.15 M NaCl at temperatures of between about 50°C to 70°C. For some applications, less stringent hybridization conditions are 20 required, by way of example and not limitation such a 0.15 M to 0.9 M salt, at temperatures ranging from between about 20°C to 55°C. Hybridization conditions can also be rendered more stringent by the addition of increasing amounts of formamide, to destabilize the hybrid duplex. Thus, 25 particular hybridization conditions can be readily manipulated, and will generally be a method of choice depending on the desired results. By way of example and not limitation, in general, convenient hybridization temperatures in the presence of 50% formamide are: 42°C for a probe which 30 is 95 to 100% homologous to the target fragment, 37°C for 90 to 95% homology and 32°C for 70 to 90% homology.

Low, moderate and high stringency conditions are well known to those of skill in the art, and will vary predictably depending on the base composition and length of 35 the particular nucleic acid sequence and on the specific organism from which the nucleic acid sequence is derived. For guidance regarding such conditions see, for example,

Sambrook et al., 1989, Molecular Cloning, A Laboratory Manual, Second Edition, Cold Spring Harbor Press, N.Y., pp. 9.47-9.57; and Ausubel et al., 1989, Current Protocols in Molecular Biology, Green Publishing Associates and Wiley Interscience, N.Y. which is incorporate herein, by reference.

In the preparation of genomic libraries, DNA fragments are generated, some of which will encode parts or the whole of *Chlamydia* HMW protein. The DNA may be cleaved at specific sites using various restriction enzymes.

- 10 Alternatively, one may use DNase in the presence of manganese to fragment the DNA, or the DNA can be physically sheared, as for example, by sonication. The DNA fragments can then be separated according to size by standard techniques, including but not limited to, agarose and polyacrylamide gel
- 15 electrophoresis, column chromatography and sucrose gradient centrifugation. The DNA fragments can then be inserted into suitable vectors, including but not limited to plasmids, cosmids, bacteriophages lambda or T₄, bacmids and yeast artificial chromosome (YAC). (See, for example, Sambrook et al., 1989, Molecular Cloning, A Laboratory Manual, 2d Ed., Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, New York; Glover, D.M. (ed.), 1985, DNA Cloning: A Practical Approach, MRL Press, Ltd., Oxford, U.K. Vol. I, II.) The genomic library may be screened by nucleic acid hybridization
- 20 to labeled probe (Benton and Davis, 1977, Science 196:180; Grunstein and Hogness, 1975, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 72:3961).

The genomic libraries may be screened with labeled degenerate oligonucleotide probes corresponding to the amino acid sequence of any peptide of HMW protein using optimal approaches well known in the art. In particular embodiments, the screening probe is a degenerate oligonucleotide that corresponds to the sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4. In another embodiment, the screening probe may be a degenerate oligonucleotide that corresponds to the sequence of SEQ ID NO: 5. In an additional embodiment, any one of the oligonucleotides of SEQ ID NOS: 6-9, 12-14 and 18-21 are used

as the probe. In further embodiments, any one of the sequences of SEQ ID NOS: 1, 10-11, 22-24 or any fragments thereof, or any complement of the sequence or fragments may be used as the probe. Any probe used preferably is 15 5 nucleotides or longer.

Clones in libraries with insert DNA encoding the HMW protein or fragments thereof will hybridize to one or more of the degenerate oligonucleotide probes. Hybridization of such oligonucleotide probes to genomic libraries are 10 carried out using methods known in the art. For example, hybridization with the two above-mentioned oligonucleotide probes may be carried out in 2X SSC, 1.0% SDS at 50°C and washed using the same conditions.

In yet another aspect, clones of nucleotide 15 sequences encoding a part or the entire HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptides may also be obtained by screening *Chlamydia* expression libraries. For example, *Chlamydia* DNA or *Chlamydia* cDNA generated from RNA is isolated and random fragments are prepared and ligated into an expression vector 20 (e.g., a bacteriophage, plasmid, phagemid or cosmid) such that the inserted sequence in the vector is capable of being expressed by the host cell into which the vector is then introduced. Various screening assays can then be used to select for the expressed HMW protein or HMW-derived 25 polypeptides. In one embodiment, the various anti-HMW antibodies of the invention can be used to identify the desired clones using methods known in the art. See, for example, Harlow and Lane, 1988, Antibodies: A Laboratory Manual, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring 30 Harbor, NY, Appendix IV. Clones or plaques from the library are brought into contact with the antibodies to identify those clones that bind.

In an embodiment, colonies or plaques containing DNA that encodes HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide could 35 be detected using DYNA Beads according to Olsvick et al., 29th ICAAC, Houston, Tex. 1989, incorporated herein by reference. Anti-HMW antibodies are crosslinked to tosylated

DYNA Beads M280, and these antibody-containing beads would then be used to adsorb to colonies or plaques expressing HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide. Colonies or plaques expressing HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide is

5 identified as any of those that bind the beads.

Alternatively, the anti-HMW antibodies can be nonspecifically immobilized to a suitable support, such as silica or Celite™ resin. This material would then be used to adsorb to bacterial colonies expressing HMW protein or HMW-
10 derived polypeptide as described in the preceding paragraph.

In another aspect, PCR amplification may be used to produce substantially pure DNA encoding a part of or the whole of HMW protein from *Chlamydia* genomic DNA.

Oligonucleotide primers, degenerate or otherwise,
15 corresponding to known HMW protein sequences can be used as primers. In particular embodiments, an oligonucleotide, degenerate or otherwise, encoding the peptide having an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2, 3 or 15-17 or any portion thereof may be used as the 5' primer. For fragment examples,
20 a 5' primer may be made from any one of the nucleotide sequences of SEQ ID NO: 4-7, 10, 12, 22-24 or any portion thereof. Nucleotide sequences, degenerate or otherwise, that are reverse complements of SEQ ID NO: 11, 13 or 14 may be used as the 3' primer.

25 PCR can be carried out, e.g., by use of a Perkin-Elmer Cetus thermal cycler and Taq polymerase (Gene Amp™). One can choose to synthesize several different degenerate primers, for use in the PCR reactions. It is also possible to vary the stringency of hybridization conditions used in
30 priming the PCR reactions, to allow for greater or lesser degrees of nucleotide sequence similarity between the degenerate primers and the corresponding sequences in *Chlamydia* DNA. After successful amplification of a segment of the sequence encoding HMW protein, that segment may be
35 molecularly cloned and sequenced, and utilized as a probe to isolate a complete genomic clone. This, in turn, will permit the determination of the gene's complete nucleotide sequence,

the analysis of its expression, and the production of its protein product for functional analysis, as described *infra*.

In a clinical diagnostic embodiment, the nucleic acid sequences of the HMW protein genes of the present invention may be used in combination with an appropriate indicator means, such as a label, for determining hybridization. A wide variety of appropriate indicator means are known in the art, including radioactive, enzymatic or other ligands, such as avidin/biotin and digoxigenin-
labelling, which are capable of providing a detectable signal. In some diagnostic embodiments, an enzyme tag such as urease, alkaline phosphatase or peroxidase, instead of a radioactive tag may be used. In the case of enzyme tags, colorimetric indicator substrates are known which can be employed to provide a means visible to the human eye or spectrophotometrically, to identify specific hybridization with samples containing HMW protein gene sequences.

The nucleic acid sequences of the HMW protein genes of the present invention are useful as hybridization probes in solution hybridizations and in embodiments employing solid-phase procedures. In embodiments involving solid-phase procedures, the test DNA (or RNA) from samples, such as clinical samples, including exudates, body fluids (e.g., serum, amniotic fluid, middle ear effusion, sputum, semen, urine, tears, mucus, bronchoalveolar lavage fluid) or even tissues, is absorbed or otherwise affixed to a selected matrix or surface. The fixed, single-stranded nucleic acid is then subjected to specific hybridization with selected probes comprising the nucleic acid sequences of the HMW protein encoding genes or fragments or analogues thereof of the present invention under desired conditions. The selected conditions will depend on the particular circumstances based on the particular criteria required depending on, for example, the G+C contents, type of target nucleic acid, source of nucleic acid, size of hybridization probe etc. Following washing of the hybridization surface so as to remove non-specifically bound probe molecules, specific

hybridization is detected, or even quantified, by means of the label. It is preferred to select nucleic acid sequence portions which are conserved among species of *Chlamydia*. The selected probe may be at least 15 bp and may be in the range 5 of about 30 to 90 bp.

Expression of the HMW protein Gene

Plasmid vectors containing replicon and control sequences which are derived from species compatible with the 10 host cell may be used for the expression of the genes encoding the HMW protein or fragments thereof in expression systems. Expression vectors contain all the necessary elements for the transcription and translation of the inserted protein coding sequence. The vector ordinarily 15 carries a replication site, as well as marking sequences which are capable of providing phenotype selection in transformed cells. For example, *E. coli* may be transformed using pBR322 which contains genes for ampicillin and tetracycline resistance cells. Other commercially available 20 vectors are useful, including but not limited to pZERO, pTrc99A, pUC19, pUC18, pKK223-3, pEX1, pCAL, pET, pSPUTK, pTrxFus, pFastBac, pThioHis, pTrcHis, pTrcHis2, and pLEX. The plasmids or phage, must also contain, or be modified to contain, promoters which can be used by the host cell for 25 expression of its own proteins.

In addition, phage vectors containing replicon and control sequences that are compatible with the host can be used as a transforming vector in connection with these hosts. For example, the phage in lambda GEM™-11 may be utilized in 30 making recombinant phage vectors which can be used to transform host cells, such as *E. coli* LE392.

Promoters commonly used in recombinant DNA construction include the β -lactamase (penicillinase) and lactose promoter systems and other microbial promoters, such 35 as the T7 promoter system as described in U.S. Patent No. 4,952,496. Details concerning the nucleotide sequences of promoters are known, enabling a skilled worker to ligate them

functionally with genes. The particular promoter used will generally be matter of choice depending upon the desired results.

In accordance with this invention, it is preferred 5 to make the HMW protein by recombinant methods, particularly when the naturally occurring HMW protein as isolated from a culture of a species of *Chlamydia* may include trace amounts of toxic materials or other contaminants. This problem can be avoided by using recombinantly produced HMW protein in 10 heterologous systems which can be isolated from the host in a manner to minimize contaminants in the isolated material. Particularly desirable hosts for expression in this regard include Gram positive bacteria which do not have LPS and are, therefore endotoxin free. Such hosts include species of 15 *Bacillus* and may be particularly useful for the production of non-pyrogenic rHMW protein, fragments or analogues thereof.

A variety of host-vector systems may be utilized to express the protein-coding sequence. These include but are not limited to mammalian cell systems infected with virus 20 (e.g., vaccinia virus, adenovirus, etc.); insect cell systems infected with virus (e.g., baculovirus); microorganisms such as yeast containing yeast vectors, or bacteria transformed with bacteriophage DNA, plasmid DNA, or cosmid DNA. Hosts that are appropriate for expression of the HMW protein genes, 25 fragments, analogues or variants thereof, may include *E. coli*, *Bacillus* species, *Haemophilus*, fungi, yeast, such as *Saccharomyces pichia*, *Bordetella*, or the baculovirus expression system may be used. Preferably, the host cell is a bacterium, and most preferably the bacterium is *E. coli*, *B. 30 subtilis* or *Salmonella*.

The expression elements of vectors vary in their strengths and specificities. Depending on the host-vector system utilized, any one of a number of suitable transcription and translation elements may be used. In a 35 preferred embodiment, a chimeric protein comprising HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide sequence and a pre and/or pro sequence of the host cell is expressed. In other

preferred embodiments, a chimeric protein comprising HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide sequence fused with, for example, an affinity purification peptide, is expressed. In further preferred embodiments, a chimeric protein comprising 5 HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide sequence and a useful immunogenic peptide or protein is expressed. In preferred embodiments, HMW-derived protein expressed contains a sequence forming either an outer-surface epitope or the receptor-binding domain of native HMW protein.

10 Any method known in the art for inserting DNA fragments into a vector may be used to construct expression vectors containing a chimeric gene consisting of appropriate transcriptional/ translational control signals and the protein coding sequences. These methods may include *in vitro* 15 recombinant DNA and synthetic techniques and *in vivo* recombinants (genetic recombination). Expression of a nucleic acid sequence encoding HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide may be regulated by a second nucleic acid sequence so that the inserted sequence is expressed in a host 20 transformed with the recombinant DNA molecule. For example, expression of the inserted sequence may be controlled by any promoter/enhancer element known in the art. Promoters which may be used to control expression of inserted sequences include, but are not limited to the SV40 early promoter 25 region (Berteroist and Chambon, 1981, Nature 290:304-310), the promoter contained in the 3' long terminal repeat of Rous sarcoma virus (Yamamoto et al., 1980, Cell 22:787-797), the herpes thymidine kinase promoter (Wagner et al., 1981, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 78:1441-1445), the regulatory 30 sequences of the metallothionein gene (Brinster et al., 1982, Nature 296:39-42) for expression in animal cells; the promoters of β -lactamase (Villa-Kamaroff et al., 1978, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 75:3727-3731), tac (DeBoer et al., 1983, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 80:21-25), P_L , or trc for 35 expression in bacterial cells (see also "Useful proteins from recombinant bacteria" in Scientific American, 1980, 242:74-94); the nopaline synthetase promoter region or the

cauliflower mosaic virus 35S RNA promoter (Gardner et al., 1981, Nucl. Acids Res. 9:2871), and the promoter of the photosynthetic enzyme ribulose biphosphate carboxylase (Herrera-Estrella et al., 1984, Nature 310:115-120) for expression in plant cells; promoter elements from yeast or other fungi such as the Gal4 promoter, the ADC (alcohol dehydrogenase) promoter, PGK (phosphoglycerol kinase) promoter, alkaline phosphatase promoter.

Expression vectors containing HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide coding sequences can be identified by three general approaches: (a) nucleic acid hybridization, (b) presence or absence of "marker" gene functions, and (c) expression of inserted sequences such as reactivity with anti-HMW antibody. In the first approach, the presence of a foreign gene inserted in an expression vector can be detected by nucleic acid hybridization using probes comprising sequences that are homologous to the inserted HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide coding sequence. In the second approach, the recombinant vector/host system can be identified and selected based upon the presence or absence of certain "marker" gene functions (e.g., thymidine kinase activity, resistance to antibiotics, transformation phenotype, occlusion body formation in baculovirus, etc.) caused by the insertion of foreign genes in the vector. For example, if the HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide coding sequence is inserted within the marker gene sequence of the vector, recombinants containing the insert can be identified by the absence of the marker gene function. In the third approach, recombinant expression vectors can be identified by assaying the foreign gene product expressed by the recombinant. Such assays can be based, for example, on the physical or functional properties of HMW protein or HMW-derived polypeptide in *in vitro* assay systems, e.g., binding to an HMW ligand or receptor, or binding with anti-HMW antibodies of the invention, or the ability of the host cell to hemagglutinate or the ability of the cell extract to interfere with hemagglutination by Chlamydia.

Once a particular recombinant DNA molecule is identified and isolated, several methods known in the art may be used to propagate it. Once a suitable host system and growth conditions are established, recombinant expression vectors can be propagated and prepared in quantity. As explained above, the expression vectors which can be used include, but are not limited to, the following vectors or their derivatives: human or animal viruses such as vaccinia virus or adenovirus; insect viruses such as baculovirus; yeast vectors; bacteriophage vectors (e.g., lambda), and plasmid and cosmid DNA vectors, to name but a few.

In addition, a host cell strain may be chosen which modulates the expression of the inserted sequences, or modifies and processes the gene product in the specific fashion desired. Expression from certain promoters can be elevated in the presence of certain inducers; thus, expression of the genetically engineered HMW protein or HMW-derived HMW may be controlled. Furthermore, different host cells have characteristic and specific mechanisms for the translational and post-translational processing and modification of proteins. Appropriate cell lines or host systems can be chosen to ensure the desired modification and processing of the foreign protein expressed.

The proteins, polypeptides, peptides, antibodies and nucleic acids of the invention are useful as reagents for clinical or medical diagnosis of *Chlamydia* infections and for scientific research on the properties of pathogenicity, virulence, and infectivity of *Chlamydia*, as well as host defense mechanisms. For example, DNA and RNA of the invention can be used as probes to identify the presence of *Chlamydia* in biological specimens by hybridization or PCR amplification. The DNA and RNA can also be used to identify other bacteria that might encode a polypeptide related to the *Chlamydia* HMW protein. The proteins of the invention may be used to prepare polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies that can be used to further purify compositions containing the proteins of the invention by affinity chromatography. The

proteins can also be used in standard immunoassays to screen for the presence of antibodies to *Chlamydia* in a sample.

7. BIOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

5 Certain plasmids that contain portions of the gene having the open reading frame of the gene encoding the HMW protein of *Chlamydia* that are described and referred to herein have been deposited with the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC) located at 12301 Parklawn Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20852, U.S.A., pursuant to the Budapest Treaty and pursuant to 37 CFR 1.808 and prior to the filing of this application. The identifications of the respective portions of the genes present in these plasmids are shown below.

Samples of the deposited materials will become 15 available to the public upon grant of a patent based upon this United States patent application. The invention described and claimed herein is not to be limited by the scope of the plasmids deposited, since the deposited embodiment is intended only as an illustration of the 20 invention. Any equivalent or similar plasmids that encode similar or equivalent proteins or fragments or analogues thereof as described in this application are within the scope of the invention.

25 Plasmid	ATCC Accession No.	Date Deposited
pAH342	ATCC 985538	September 8, 1997

8. Examples

The above disclosure generally describes the 30 present invention. A more specific description is provided below in the following examples. The examples are described solely for the purpose of illustration and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention. Changes in form and substitution of equivalents are contemplated as circumstances 35 suggest or render expedient. Although specific terms have been employed herein, such terms are intended in a descriptive sense and not for purposes of limitation.

Methods of molecular genetics, protein biochemistry and immunology used but not explicitly described in the disclosure and examples are amply reported in the scientific literature and are well within the ability of those skilled in the art.

Example 1.

Isolation and Purification of Mature Chlamydia Protein

McCoy cells were cultured either in standard 225cm² tissue culture flasks or in Bellco spinner flasks (Cytodex microcarrier, Pharmacia) at 37°C in 5% CO₂, using DMEM media supplemented with 10% *Chlamydia*-antibody free fetal bovine serum, glucose and nonessential amino acids. *C. trachomatis* L₂ elementary bodies (ATCC VR-902B) were prepared from lysates of infected McCoy cells. Basically, McCoy cells infected with *C. trachomatis* L₂ (LGV) were sonicated and cellular debris was removed by centrifugation. The supernatant containing chlamydial elementary bodies (EBs) was then centrifuged and the pellet containing EBs was resuspended in Hanks' balanced salts solution (HBSS). RNase/DNase solution was added and incubated at 37°C for 1 hour with occasional mixing. The EB containing solution was layered onto a discontinuous density gradient (40%, 44% and 54%) of Angiovist 370 (mixture of diatrizoate meglumine and diatrizoate sodium, Berlex Laboratories, Wayne, NJ) and ultracentrifuged for separation of the EBs on the gradient. After centrifugation the EBs were harvested from the gradient between the interface of the 44% and 54% Angiovist 370 layers. The EBs were washed in phosphate buffered saline and resuspended in HBSS.

Purified EBs were sequentially extracted with 0.1% OGP [high ionic strength] in HBSS to remove peripheral surface proteins and held on ice. The same EB preparation was then extracted with 1.0% OGP, 10 mM DTT, 1 mM PMSF, 10 mM EDTA, in a 50 mM Tris pH 7.4 buffer. Extracts were dialyzed (3500 MWCO) to remove detergent and other reagents and concentrated by lyophilization. Protein containing extracts

were diluted in HBSS and passed over commercially available heparin-sepharose columns (HiTrap Col., Pharmacia). After samples were applied to the heparin column nonadhered proteins were removed by washing with excess HBSS. Bound 5 proteins were batch eluted with PBS containing 2M sodium chloride. Eluents were dialyzed extensively to remove salt and then lyophilized. The heparin-binding proteins were size fractionated by SDS-PAGE and visualized by silver staining or analyzed by Western blotting. Protein(s) of about 105-115 10 KDa present in moderate amounts were detected as shown in Figure 1. The isoelectric point of the native HMW protein was determined to be about 5.95.

To obtain one N-terminal amino acid sequence, sufficient quantities of the HMW protein (\geq 5 ug) were 15 electroblotted onto a PVDF membrane (Applied Biosystems), and stained with Coomassie blue. Immobilized HMW protein was released from the membrane and treated in situ with low levels of endopeptidase Lys-C, endopeptidase Arg-C and/or endopeptidase Glu-C to fragment the native protein. The 20 resulting peptide fragments were purified by HPLC and their N-terminal amino acid sequences determined using an ABI 430 Protein Sequenator and standard protein sequencing methodologies. The N-terminal amino acid sequence is:

25

E-I-M-V-P-Q-G-I-Y-D-G-E-T-L-T-V-S-F-X-Y

and is denoted SEQ ID No.: 3.

When a composite PDB+SwissProt+PIR+GenPept database (>145 K unique sequences) was searched with the HMW protein 30 N-terminal sequence (20 residues) using rigorous match parameters, no precise homologies were found. Thus the HMW protein is a novel chlamydial protein. Since this protein was isolated under conditions that should release only peripheral membrane proteins (e.g. Omp2), these data indicate 35 that the HMW protein is a surface-associated protein.

Example 2.

Preparation of Antibodies to Whole Chlamydia EBs

To aid in the characterization of the HMW protein, hyperimmune rabbit antisera was raised against whole EBs from *C. trachomatis* L₂. Each animal was given a total of three 5 immunizations of about 250 ug of *Chlamydia* EBs per injection (beginning with complete Freund's adjuvant and followed with incomplete Freund's adjuvant) at approximately 21 day intervals. At each immunization, approximately half of the material was administered intramuscularly (i.m.) and half was 10 injected intranodally. Fourteen days after the third vaccination a fourth booster of about 100 ug of EBs was given i.m. and the animals exsanguinated 7-10 days later. A titre of 1:100,000 was obtained as determined by ELISA.

15 Example 3.

Determination of Post-translational modifications

Recently, several *C. trachomatis* membrane-associated proteins have been shown to be post-translationally modified. The 18 kDa and 32 kDa cysteine-rich EB proteins, which are lectin-binding proteins, have been shown to carry specific carbohydrate moieties (Swanson, A.F. and C.C. Kuo. 1990. Infect. Immun. 58:502-507). Incorporation of radiolabelled palmitic acid has been used to demonstrate that the about 27 kDa *C. trachomatis* Mip-like 25 protein is lipidated (Lundemose, A.G., D.A. Rouch, C.W. Penn, and J.H. Pearce. 1993. J. Bacteriol. 175:3669-3671). Swanson et al. have discovered that the MOMP from the L₂ serovar contains N-acetylglucosamine and/or N-acetylgalactosamine and these carbohydrate moieties mediate binding of MOMP to HeLa 30 cell membranes.

To ascertain whether the HMW protein is glycosylated, EBs are grown on McCoy cells in the presence of tritiated galactose or glucosamine, subjected to heparin affinity chromatography and the heparin binding proteins 35 analyzed by SDS-PAGE and autoradiography. Briefly, McCoy cells are grown in T225 flasks under standard conditions (DMEM + 10% FCS, 35ml per flask, 10% CO₂) to about 90%

confluence and inoculated with sufficient EBs to achieve 90%-100% infectivity. Following a 3 hour infection period at 37°C cycloheximide is added (1 ug/ml) to inhibit host cell protein synthesis and the cultures reincubated for an 5 additional 4-6 hours. Approximately 0.5 mCi of tritiated galactose (D-[4,5-³H(N)]galactose, NEN) or glucosamine (D-[1,6-³H(N)glucosamine, NEN) is then be added to each flask and the cultures allowed to incubate for an additional 30-40 hours. Cells are harvested by scraping and EBs purified by 10 gradient centrifugation. HMW protein is isolated from 1.0% OGP surface extracts by affinity chromatography, eluted with NaCl and analyzed by SDS-PAGE using ¹⁴C-labelled molecular weight markers (BRL) then subjected to autoradiography. Dried gels are exposed for 1-4 weeks to Kodak X-AR film at - 15 70°C.

To determine post synthesis lipid modification, *C.trachomatis* serovar L₂ is cultivated on monolayers of McCoy cells according to standard procedures. Approximately 24 hours postinfection, conventional culture media (DMEM + 10% 20 FCS) is removed and replaced with a serum-free medium containing cycloheximide (1ug/ml) and [³H-U-¹⁴C]palmitic acid (0.5 mCi/T225 flask, NEN) and incubated for a further 16-24 hours to allow protein lipidation to occur. Surface EB extracts are prepared, heparin-binding proteins are isolated 25 and analyzed by autoradiography as described above.

The functionality of glycosylated or lipidated moieties is assessed by treating whole EBs or OGP surface extracts with appropriate glycosidases. Following carbohydrate removal, extracts are subjected to affinity 30 chromatography and SDS-PAGE to determine whether the HMW protein retains the ability to bind to heparin sulfate.

Example 4.

Cloning of the N-terminal Segment of the HMW Protein Gene

35 Degenerate oligonucleotides were designed based on the N-terminal amino acid sequence of the HMW protein and were synthesized. These oligonucleotides were then used to

generate gene-specific PCR products that were employed as hybridization probes to screen a *C. trachomatis* L₂ λZAPII DNA library to isolate the gene for the HMW protein.

Briefly, appropriate low degeneracy peptide 5 segments were identified from the N-terminal and internal amino acid sequence data by computer analysis (MacVector, IBI) and used to guide the design of low degeneracy sequence-specific oligonucleotide PCR primer sets.

Using the N-terminal primary sequence as a guide, 10 four degenerate oligonucleotide probes complementary to the first six residues of the HMW peptide E-I-M-V-P-Q (residues 1-6 of SEQ ID No.: 3), and comprising all possible nucleotide combinations (total degeneracy = 192 individual sequences), have been designed and employed as forward amplification 15 primers.

SEQ ID No.4	5'-GAA-ATH-ATG-GTN-CCN-CAA-3'
SEQ ID No.5	5'-GAA-ATH-ATG-GTN-CCN-CAG-3'
SEQ ID No.6	5'-GAG-ATH-ATG-GTN-CCN-CAA-3'
20 SEQ ID No.7	5'-GAG-ATH-ATG-GTN-CCN-CAG-3'

Two additional oligonucleotide probes representing the reverse complement DNA sequence of the internal five residue peptide Y-D-G-E-T (residues 9-13 of SEQ ID No.: 3), and 25 comprising all possible nucleotide combinations (total degeneracy = 128 individual sequences), have been designed and employed as reverse amplification primers.

SEQ ID No.8	5'-NGT-YTC-NCC-RTC-ATA-3'
30 SEQ ID No.9	5'-NGT-YTC-NCC-RTC-GTA-3'

Oligonucleotides were synthesized on an ABI Model 380B DNA synthesizer using a 0.2 μmol scale column (trityl-on, auto-cleavage) and standard phosphoramidite chemistry. 35 Crude oligonucleotides were manually purified over C-18 syringe columns (OP Columns, ABI). Purity and yield were ascertained spectrophotometrically (230/260/280 ratios).

Standard PCR amplification reactions (2 mM Mg²⁺, 200 umol dNTPs, 0.75 units AmpliTaq, 50 ul final volume) were programmed using about 0.2 ug *C. trachomatis* L₂ DNA (about 3X10⁷ copies of the HMW protein gene if single copy) and 5 about 100 pmol of each forward (N-terminal oligo) and reverse (internal oligo) primer. Higher than normal concentrations of primers (~20 pmol/50 ul) were used for amplification, at least initially, in order to compensate for primer degeneracy. Amplification of target sequences was achieved 10 using a standard 30-cycle, three-step thermal profile, i.e. 95°C, 30 sec; 60°C, 45 sec, 72°C, 1 min. Amplification was carried out in sealed 50ul glass capillary tubes using a Idaho Technologies thermal cycler. To verify that the PCR products generated during these amplification reactions were 15 specific for the HMW protein coding sequence and were not "primer-dimer" or other DNA amplification artifacts, amplimers were purified using silica-gel spin columns (QIAGEN), cloned into the PCR cloning vector pZERO (StrataGene), and subjected to direct DNA sequence analysis.

20 The DNA sequence for the cloned PCR products were determined using conventional dideoxy-terminator sequencing chemistry and a modified T7 DNA polymerase (Sequenase, USB). Briefly, each double stranded plasmid template was denatured by a brief treatment with NaOH. Following neutralization, 25 each denatured template was used to program 4 separate sequencing reactions. Each reaction contained the M13 universal forward sequencing primer (21mer) but a different ddNTP/dNTP termination mix (i.e. A,G,C, or T). Termination products were labelled by including [α -³⁵S]dATP in the 30 reaction (~50uCi/reaction, >3000Ci/mmol, Amersham). Individual extension products were denatured (formamide, ~95°C) and subjected to high resolution denaturing polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (6% acrylamide, 8M urea, TAE buffer, ~500V, ~90min). Sequencing gels were then 35 transferred to filter paper (Whatmann 3MM), dried under vacuum, and then autoradiographed at -70°C for 24-72 hours.

Base ladders were read manually from each gel and a consensus sequence determined.

- HMW protein-specific amplimers suitable for library screening and/or Southern blotting were produced by PCR and 5 uniformly radiolabelled during the amplification process by adding [α -³²P]dNTPs (about 50 uCi each dNTP, Amersham, >5000 Ci/mmol) to the reaction mixture. Labelling reactions were performed as above except reactions were performed in 0.5ml microcentrifuge tubes using a Bellco Thermal Cycler.
- 10 Unincorporated label and amplification primers were removed from the reaction mixture using centrifugal size-exclusion chromatography columns (BioSpin 6 columns, BioRad).

A highly redundant *C. trachomatis* serovar L₂ DNA library (>50,000 primary clones) has been constructed by 15 cloning size-fractionated fragments \geq 10 Kbp produced from a partial EcoRI digest of genomic DNA into the lambda cloning vector λ ZAPII (Stratagene). Radiolabelled HMW protein-specific PCR products were used to screen this library for recombinant clones that carry all or part of the HMW protein 20 coding sequence. Standard recombinant DNA procedures and methodologies were employed for these experiments. All phage that hybridized with these probes were purified to homogeneity by sequential rounds of plating and hybridization screening. Once reactive phage were purified, insert- 25 containing phagemids (pBluescript SK- derivatives) were excision-rescued from the parental phage by coinfecting host cells with an appropriate helper phage, e.g. R408 or VCSM13 (Stratagene). Individual phagemids were further purified by streak-plating on LB agar containing ampicillin (100ug/ml) 30 and selecting for individual colonies.

To confirm purified phagemid derivatives carried the HMW protein sequences, plasmid DNA was prepared and used to program amplification reactions containing the HMW protein-specific PCR primer sets. The presence of HMW 35 protein-specific inserts was confirmed by the production of the appropriate sized PCR product.

Plasmid pAH306 is one HMW protein-containing derivative that was isolated by these methodologies.

Physical Mapping of pAH306

- 5 The inserts from pAH306 were physically mapped and the location of HMW protein gene determined using appropriate six-base restriction endonucleases (e.g. EcoRI, HindIII, BamHI, PstI, SmaI, KpnI, etc.) and HMW protein coding sequences localized by Southern hybridization employing
10 radiolabelled N-terminal-specific PCR products as probes. The orientation and extent of HMW protein-specific sequences were determined by PCR analysis using primer sets consisting of HMW protein-specific forward primers and reverse primers complementary to either the T3 or T7 promoter sequences
15 located in the cloning vector.

Plasmid pAH306 was determined to contain a single ~6.6 Kbp EcoRI fragment of chlamydial origin. Directional PCR analysis of pAH306 demonstrated this derivative encodes roughly 1.5Kbp of the N-terminal region of the HMW protein
20 gene.

The DNA sequence for the HMW protein gene encoded on pAH306 was obtained for both strands via conventional "sequence-walking" coupled with asymmetric PCR cycle sequencing methodologies (ABI Prism Dye-Terminator Cycle
25 Sequencing, Perkin-Elmer). Sequencing reactions were programmed with undigested plasmid DNA (~0.5ug/rxn) as a template and appropriate HMW protein-specific sequencing primers (~3.5pmol/rxn).

In addition to the template and sequencing primer,
30 each sequencing reaction (~20ul) contained the four different dNTPs (i.e. A,G,C, and T) and the four corresponding ddNTPs (i.e. ddA, ddG, ddC, and ddT) terminator nucleotides; with each terminator being conjugated to one of four different fluorescent dyes. Single strand sequencing elongation
35 products were terminated at random positions along the template by the incorporation of the dye-labelled ddNTP terminators. Fluorescent dye-labelled termination products

were purified using microcentrifuge size-exclusion chromatography columns (Princeton Genetics), dried under vacuum, suspended in a Template Resuspension Buffer (Perkin-Elmer), denatured at 95°C for ~5min, and resolved by high 5 resolution capillary electrophoresis on an ABI 310 Automated DNA Sequenator (Perkin-Elmer).

DNA sequence data produced from individual reactions were collected and the relative fluorescent peak intensities analyzed automatically on a PowerMAC computer 10 using ABI Sequence Analysis Software (Perkin-Elmer).

Individually autoanalyzed DNA sequences were edited manually for accuracy before being merged into a consensus sequence "string" using AutoAssembler software (Perkin-Elmer). Both strands of the HMW protein gene segment encoded by pAH306 15 were sequenced and these data compiled to create a composite sequence for the HMW protein gene segment. The sequence encoding the segment of HMW protein is listed as SEQ ID No.: 10 and is represented by nucleotides 382 to 1979 in Figure 2. A map of pAH306 is shown in Figure 5.

20 Database analysis (e.g. primary amino acid homologies, hydrophy profiles, N-/O-glycosylation sites, functional/conformational domain analyses) of the DNA and predicted amino acid sequences for the HMW protein was performed using GeneRunner and Intelligentics software, 25 indicating the HMW protein is novel.

Example 5.

Cloning of the C-terminal Segment of the HMW protein Gene

Chromosome walking was employed to isolate the C- 30 terminal portion of the HMW protein gene. A ~0.6Kbp BamHI-EcoRI fragment distal to the N-terminal sequence of the mature HMW protein and proximal to the T3 promoter sequence of the vector was chosen as the probe for the initial chromosome walk. Briefly, pAH306 was digested to completion 35 with BamHI and EcoRI and the digestion products size fractionated by agarose gel electrophoresis (0.8% agarose in TAE buffer). The desired ~0.6Kbp BamHI/EcoRI (B/E) band was

excised from the gel and purified using commercially available silica gel microcentrifuge chromatography columns and reagents (QIAGEN).

The purified 0.6Kbp B/E fragment was radiolabelled 5 with [α -dATP] (>3000Ci/mmol, Amersham) via random-priming labelling methodologies employing commercially available reagents (Boehringer Mannheim) and used to probe Southern blots of *C. trachomatis* L₂ genomic DNA that had been digested to completion with HindIII.

10 The 0.6Kbp B/E probe from pAH306 hybridized to a ~1.4Kbp HindIII genomic fragment. Based on the experimentally derived restriction map of the HMW protein gene segment encoded on pAH306, this fragment encodes ~0.2Kbp of the C-terminal HMW protein sequence.

15 The radiolabelled 0.6Kbp B/E fragment was used subsequently to probe a moderately redundant (~5,000 primary clones) *C. trachomatis* L₂ library to identify clones that contain the ~1.4Kbp HindIII fragment. Briefly, *C. trachomatis* L₂ genomic DNA was digested to completion using a 20 ~10-fold excess of the restriction endonuclease HindIII (~10 units per 1ug of genomic DNA, 37°C, 18-24 hours). Digestion products were size fractionated by agarose gel electrophoresis (0.8% agarose, TAE) and DNA fragments ranging in size from ~1.0Kbp to 2.0Kbp were excised from the gel.

25 Excised agarose strips contain the desired DNA fragment sizes were dissolved in a solubilization/binding solution (QX1, QIAGEN) and purified using commercially available silica-gel spin columns (QIAGEN). Purified 1.0-2.0Kbp genomic HindIII fragments were then cloned into the 30 pBlueScript SK- plasmid which had been previously digested to completion with HindIII and treated with calf intestinal phosphatase to prevent vector religation.

Vector/insert ligations were performed in a ~50ul final reaction volume (50mM Tris-HCl, pH 7.00; 10mM NaCl; 1mM 35 ATP; 0.5mM DTT) at 25°C for ~16-24 hours using T4 DNA ligase (~10 units/reaction) and a vector:insert molar ratio of approximately 1:10. Following ligation, aliquots (~50ng

ligated DNA) were used to electroporate a competent *E.coli* host, e.g. *E.coli* TOP10. Electroporated cells were then plated onto LB agar containing ~100ug/ml ampicillin to select for plasmid-harboring clones. Approximately 1,000 plasmid-
5 harboring Ap^R transformants were transferred directly from LB Ap¹⁰⁰ agar plates onto nylon membranes (HyBond N+, Amersham) by capillary action.

Following transfer, plates were re-incubated at 37°C to regenerate viable colonies for further manipulation.

10 Colonies transferred to membranes were lysed and DNA liberated by treating the colony blots with a denaturing SDS/NaOH solution. A Tris buffered NaCl solution was used to neutralize and stabilize lysis material. Released DNA was immobilized onto the membranes by UV irradiation. Standard
15 recombinant DNA procedures and methodologies were employed to probe the colony blots with the radiolabelled 0.6Kbp B/E fragment and identify recombinant derivatives which carry the desired ~1.4Kbp HindIII fragment.

Plasmid pAH310 was one derivative isolated by these
20 procedures and the coding segment of the HMW protein is represented by nucleotides 994-2401 in Figure 2.

Restriction analysis using HindIII and EcoRI, individually and in combination, together with DNA sequence analysis of purified plasmid DNA confirmed pAH310 encodes the
25 expected ~1.4Kbp HindIII fragment. These analyses also demonstrated that the ~1.4Kbp insert consists of the same ~1.2Kbp HindIII-EcoRI fragment that is present in pAH306 and a unique ~0.2Kbp EcoRI-HindIII fragment that encodes C-terminal HMW protein-specific DNA.

30 The ~0.2Kbp EcoRI-HindIII (E/H) fragment was chosen as the probe for the second chromosome walk. Briefly, pAH310 was digested to completion with EcoRI and HindIII and the digestion products size fractionated by agarose gel electrophoresis (0.8% agarose in TAE buffer). The desired
35 ~0.2Kbp (E/H) band was excised from the gel, purified, radiolabelled with [α -P³²]dATP, and used as a probe to identify clones in the original *C.trachomatis* L₂ λZAPII

genomic library that encode the C-terminal segment of the HMW protein gene.

Plasmid pAH316 is one derivative isolated by these procedures. Restriction analysis of pAH316 demonstrated that 5 this derivative contains a *C. trachomatis* L₂ insert of ~4.5Kbp which consists of two EcoRI fragments of ~2.5Kbp and ~2.0Kbp in size. Southern hybridization analysis using the ~0.2Kbp E/H fragment as a probe localized this sequence to the ~2.5Kbp EcoRI fragment of pAH316. Directional PCR analyses 10 employing purified pAH316 plasmid DNA as a template and amplification primer sets specific for ~0.2Kbp E/H fragment and T3 and T7 vector sequences demonstrated pAH316 encodes the C-terminal segment of the HMW protein gene. The coding segment of the HMW protein is represented by nucleotides 1974 15 to 3420 in Figure 2, and is listed as SEQ ID No.:11.

Example 6.

Production of Truncated HMW Recombinant Protein

The N-terminal half of the HMW protein was PCR 20 cloned as a ~1.5Kbp fragment into the commercially available *E.coli* expression plasmid pTrcHisB (Invitrogen). The forward primer used in these reactions was designated 140FXHO (57mer), listed as SEQ ID No. 18, and contains sequences complementary to the first 10 N-terminal residues of the 25 mature HMW protein. In addition to the HMW protein coding sequences, this forward primer also carries a unique XhoI restriction site located optimally located upstream of the first residue of the mature HMW protein (Glu/E) for proper fusion to the (His)₆ affinity purification domain encoded on 30 the vector plasmid, and 5' terminal 6 base G/C clamp for effective amplification and a 12 base internal spacer for effective endonuclease recognition and digestion.

SEQ ID No.18 5' - AAG-GGC-CCA-ATT-ACG-CAG-AGC-TCG-AGA-GAA-
35 ATT-ATG-GTT-CCT-CAA-GGA-ATT-TAC-GAT - 3'

SEQ ID No.19 5' - CGC-TCT-AGA-ACT-AGT-GGA-TC - 3'

The commercially available reverse sequencing primer SK (20mer, StrataGene), SEQ ID No. 19, which is complementary to phagemid sequences downstream of the EcoRI site in pAH306, was used as the reverse amplification primer in these 5 reactions. To obtain acceptable yields of the HMW protein ORF product (~1.5Kbp), PCR amplification was performed using a mixture of thermostable DNA polymerases consisting of *T. thermophilus* DNA polymerase (Advantage Polymerase), as the primary amplification polymerase and a minor amount of a 10 second high fidelity thermostable DNA polymerase to provide additional 5' - 3' proofreading activity (CloneTech). An anti-Tth DNA polymerase antibody was added to the reaction mixture to provide automatic "hot-start" conditions which foster the production of large >2Kbp amplimers. pAH306 15 plasmid DNA purified using a commercially available alkaline/SDS system (QIAGEN) and silica gel spin columns (QIAGEN) was used to program these amplification reactions (~0.2ng/reaction).

The ~1.5Kbp amplimer was purified from 20 unincorporated primers using silica gel spin columns and digested to completion using an excess of XhoI and EcoRI (~10 units per 1ug DNA). The purified and digested N-terminal truncated HMW protein ORF was then be cloned into the commercially available expression plasmid pTrcHisB that had 25 been previously digested with both XhoI and EcoRI (5:1, insert:vector ratio). Aliquots from the ligation reaction were then be used to electrotransform a suitable *E.coli* host (e.g. TOP10).

Mini-prep DNA from ampicillin-resistant 30 transformants picked at random were prepared, digested to completion with XhoI, EcoRI, or a combination of both and examined for the presence and orientation of the ~1.5 Kbp truncated HMW protein ORF insert by agarose gel electrophoresis. Mini-prep DNA from clones determined to 35 carry the ~1.5Kbp XhoI/EcoRI insert was prepared and used to program asymmetric PCR DNA sequencing reactions to confirm the fidelity of the junction formed between the HMW protein

fragment and the (His)₆ affinity purification domain of the expression vector. Plasmid pJJ36-J was one recombinant derivative isolated by these procedures and is represented by nucleotides 446 to 1977 in figure 2. The deduced amino acid sequence of the truncated fragment of HMW protein is represented by amino acids 29 to 532 in Figure 3 and is listed as SEQ ID No. 17.

Example 7.

10 Determination of Presence in Other Species

Polymerase chain reaction analyses were undertaken to establish the presence of the HMW gene in several clinically recognized *C. trachomatis* strains and as well as other chlamydial species, e.g., *C. pneumoniae*. *Chlamydia trachomatis* strains as frozen stocks from the ATCC (Rockville, MD) were used to infect subconfluent monolayers (about 80%) of McCoy cells according to standard procedures. Infected monolayers were either centrifuged in a Sorvall RT6000B centrifuge (~1,300 rpm, 25°C, 30min) and/or treated with dextran sulfate (~50 ug/ml) at the time of infection to enhance initial attachment of the low infectivity biovars (non-LGV) to host cells and thus increase the final EB yield. Roughly 48 hours later, infected monolayers were collected by scraping and host cells disrupted by sonication to release elementary bodies (EBs). Total DNA was extracted from purified EBs (~10⁷-10⁸) of each strain using the proteinase K/Nonidet P40 method described by Denamur, et al., *J. Gen. Microbiol.* 137:2525-2530 (1991), incorporated herein by reference, and further purified by phenol/chloroform extraction and salt precipitation. Purified *Chlamydia pneumoniae* (AR-139) genomic DNA was purchased from Advanced Biotechnologies Inc.

To determine the presence of the HMW protein gene in these strains, amplification reactions were programmed using total *Chlamydia* DNA as template and the HMW protein segment-specific oligonucleotide primer (21mers) sets listed below.

SEQ ID No.20 5' - ATG-GTT-CCT-CAA-GGA-ATT-TAC-G - 3'

SEQ ID No.21 5' - GGT-CCC-CCA-TCA-GCG-GGA-G - 3'

Briefly, standard PCR amplification reactions (2 mM Mg²⁺, 100 umol dNTPs, 0.75 units AmpliTaq polymerase, 50 ul final volume) were programmed using approximately 15ul of the crude *C. trachomatis* DNA extracts (~10ul of the commercially available *C. pneumoniae* DNA) and ~20 pmol of each forward and reverse HMW protein-specific amplification primers of SEQ ID No. 20 and 21. Amplification of small target sequences (< 2Kbp) was achieved using a 32-cycle, three-step thermal profile, i.e. 95°C, 30 sec; 60°C, 30 sec, 72°C, 1 min. Amplification of longer target sequences for ORF-cloning and sequencing was carried out using the crude DNA extracts in an identical fashion except that a MAb-inactivated Tth/Vent DNA polymerase enzyme combination was employed (Advantage PCR, Clontech) and a 72°C extension time was used that matched the size of the desired PCR product plus 2 min (i.e. desired PCR product = 6Kbp, extension time = 8 min).

Both conventional and long-distance PCRs were carried out using 0.2ml thin-walled polypropylene microcentrifuge tubes in an ABI 2400 Thermal Cycler (Perkin-Elmer). Following thermal cycling, aliquots (~20ul) of the reactions were analyzed and PCR products identified by standard agarose gel electrophoresis (0.8% agarose in TAE buffer) and ethidium bromide staining. The results showed that the HMW protein is highly conserved in clinically relevant serovars; the HMW gene was present in all *C. chlamydia* samples strains tested, including serovars B, Ba, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L₁, L₂ and MoPn and in *C. pneumoniae*.

30

Example 8.

Determination of Sequence Variation

To establish the degree of DNA and amino acid sequence variation among different *Chlamydia* strains, the gene for the HMW protein was PCR-cloned from both a *C. trachomatis* B serovar (representing the trachoma group of organisms) and from a *C. trachomatis* F serovar (representing

the low infectivity STD biovars) and compared to the HMW protein consensus *C. trachomatis* L₂ sequence.

Briefly, LD-PCR was used to generate ~6Kbp HMW protein-specific DNA fragments from *C. trachomatis* B and F genomic DNA that contain the complete coding sequence for the mature HMW protein. Amplification conditions for these LD-PCR exercises were as described in Example 6. The reverse amplification primer employed in these reactions (p316Kpn-RC, 56mer), listed as SEQ ID No. 13, is complementary to a sequence located ~3Kbp downstream of the predicted HMW protein termination codon. As an aide to cloning the desired ~6Kbp amplimer, a single KpnI restriction endonuclease site 5' to the chlamydial sequence was engineered into the p316Kpn-RC primer. The forward amplification primer used for these reactions (p306Kpn-F, 56mer), listed as SEQ ID No. 12, contains the sequence complementary to the first 10 amino acid residues (30 nucleotides) specifying the mature HMW protein as well as a 5' sequence specifying a KpnI site. p306Kpn-F was designed such that the sequence encoding the N-terminus of the mature HMW protein could be linked in-frame to a hexa-His affinity domain encoded downstream of the highly efficient trc promoter on the *E.coli* expression vector pTrcHisB (ClonTech) when the ~6Kbp amplimer was inserted into the KpnI site of this vector.

25

SEQ ID No.12 5'-AAG-GGC-CCA-ATT-ACG-CAG-AGG-GTA-CCG-AAA-
TTA-TGG-TTC-CTC-AAG-GAA-TTT-ACG-AT-3'

SEQ ID No.13 5'-AAG-GGC-CCA-ATT-ACG-CAG-AGG-GTA-CCC-TAA-
30 GAA-GAA-GGC-ATG-CCG-TGC-TAG-CGG-AG- 3'

The ~6 Kbp HMW protein products were purified using silica-gel spin columns (QIAGEN) and the fragments subjected to two 8-10 hour cycles of KpnI digestion using a 10-fold excess of 35 KpNI (~10 units per 1 ug of purified fragment, 37°C). Following the second digestion, residual restriction enzyme activity was removed using QIAGEN spin columns and the ~6 Kbp

KpnI HMW protein fragments cloned into the pTrcHisB plasmid which had been previously digested to completion with KpnI and treated with calf intestinal phosphatase to prevent vector religation.

5 Vector/insert ligations were performed in a ~50ul final reaction volume (50mM Tris-HCl, pH 7.00; 10mM NaCl; 1mM ATP; 0.5mM DTT) at 25°C for ~2 hours using T4 DNA ligase (~10 units/reaction) and a vector:insert molar ratio of approximately 1:5. Following ligation, aliquots (~50ng 10 ligated DNA) was used to electroporate a competent *E.coli* host, e.g. *E.coli* TOP10. Plasmid-harboring transformants were selected by plating electrotransformed cells onto LB agar containing 100 ug/ml ampicillin. Ampicillin-resistant (Ap^R) transformants appearing after a ~18-24 hour incubation 15 period at 37°C were picked at random and restreaked onto the same selective media for purification.

A single, purified Ap^R colony from each initial transformant was used to inoculate ~5ml of LB broth and grown overnight at 37°C in a incubator shaker with mild aeration 20 (~200 rpm). Cells from broth cultures were harvested by centrifugation and used to prepare small quantities of plasmid DNA. Commercially available reagents (QIAGEN Plasmid Mini Kits) were employed for these plasmid extractions. Plasmid derivatives carrying inserts were presumptively 25 identified by electrophoresing the non-digested plasmid DNA in agarose gels (0.8% agarose in TAE buffer) and identifying derivatives greater in size than vector plasmid. Insert-containing derivatives were confirmed and the orientation of the HMW protein inserts relative to vector sequences were 30 determined using appropriate restriction endonucleases (KpnI, EcoRI, HindIII, BamHI, etc.), either separately or together in various combinations.

The DNA sequence of the *C. trachomatis* B and F HMW protein genes were obtained for both strands using "sequence 35 walking" the asymmetric dye-terminator PCR cycle sequencing methodology (ABI Prism Dye-Terminator Cycle Sequencing, Perkin-Elmer) described in Example 4. Reactions were

programmed with plasmid mini-prep DNA and individual HMW protein sequence-specific primers that were employed in the sequencing of the HMW protein gene from the L₂ type strain.

DNA sequence data were collected using the ABI 310 5 Sequenator and analyzed automatically on a PowerMAC computer and appropriate computer software as described in Example 4. Individually autoanalyzed DNA sequences were edited manually for accuracy before being merged into a consensus sequence "string" using AutoAssembler software (Perkin-Elmer). Both 10 strands of the HMW protein gene from the *C. trachomatis* B and F serovars were sequenced and these data compiled to create composite consensus sequences for both the *C. trachomatis* B and F HMW protein genes. These sequences are listed as SEQ ID Nos.: 14 and 15. Sequence comparisons of the L₂, F and B 15 strains are presented in Figure 6.

Example 9.

Production of Recombinant Protein

To produce sufficient quantities of recombinant HMW 20 protein for both immunogenicity and animal protection studies, the HMW gene has been PCR cloned into suitable *E.coli* and baculovirus expression systems. Large quantities of rHMW protein are produced in an *E.coli* - based system as a chimeric fusion protein containing an N-terminal (His)₆, 25 affinity purification domain. The complete HMW protein open reading frame (ORF) was PCR-cloned from the *C. trachomatis* L₂ genome as a single KpnI fragment and fused in the proper orientation and in the correct reading frame to the (His)₆, affinity purification domain encoded on the high expression 30 plasmid vector pTrcHisB (CloneTech) as described in Example 5.

The (His)₆ affinity purification domain is part of a high expression locus consisting of the highly efficient tac promoter (IPTG-inducible) and consensus Shine and Delgarno 35 ribosome binding site (RBS) located immediately upstream of the (His)₆ affinity purification domain. The HMW protein

genes from *C. trachomatis* LGV L₂, *C. trachomatis* B, and *C. trachomatis* F were PCR cloned as ~3.0Kbp fragments. The forward primer (56mer) used in these reactions was designated p306Kpn-F and contains sequences complementary to the first 5 10 N-terminal amino acid residues of the mature HMW protein, listed as SEQ ID No 12. In addition to the HMW protein coding sequences, this forward primer also carries a unique KpnI restriction site located optimally located upstream of the first residue of the mature HMW protein(Glu) for proper 10 fusion to the (His)₆ affinity purification domain encoded on the vector plasmid, and 5' terminal 6 base G/C clamp for effective amplification and a 12 base internal spacer for effective endonuclease recognition/digestion. The reverse 15 PCR primer, designated p316Kpn-3RC, contains a reverse complement sequence to a *C. trachomatis* sequence located ~0.2Kbp downstream of the HMW protein termination codon, listed as SEQ ID No. 14. As with p306Kpn-F, the reverse primer also contains a KpnI restriction site 5' to the *C. trachomatis* sequences, a 6 base G/C clamp, and a 12 base 20 internal spacer.

To obtain acceptable yields of the HMW protein ORF product (about 3,500bp), PCR amplification was performed using a mixture of thermostable DNA polymerases consisting of *T. thermophilus* DNA polymerase as the primary amplification 25 polymerase and a minor amount of a second high fidelity thermostable DNA polymerase to provide additional 5' - 3' proofreading activity (Advantage Polymerase, CloneTech). An anti-Tth DNA polymerase antibody was added to the reaction mixture to provide automatic "hot-start" conditions which 30 foster the production of large (>2Kbp) amplimers.

Genomic DNA from the various *C. trachomatis* strains was isolated from EBs as described in the example above and used to program these reactions. Following amplification, the desired reaction products were purified from excess 35 primers using commercially available silica-gel spin columns and reagents (QIAGEN) and digested to completion with an excess of KpnI (~10 units per 1ug DNA). The purified and

digested KpnI HMW protein ORF was then be cloned into the KpnI predigested pTrcHisB expression plasmid (5:1, insert:vector ratio). Aliquots from the ligation reaction were then used to electrotransform a suitable *E.coli* host 5 (e.g. TOP10).

Mini-prep DNA from ampicillin-resistant transformants picked at random were prepared, digested to completion with KpnI, HindIII, or a combination of both and examined for the presence and orientation of the ~3.2 Kbp HMW 10 protein ORF insert by agarose gel electrophoresis and ethidium bromide staining. Mini-prep DNA was used to program asymmetric PCR DNA sequencing reactions as described in example(s) above to confirm the fidelity of the junction formed between the HMW protein fragment and the (His)₆, 15 affinity purification domain of the vector. Plasmid pAH342 was one derivative isolated by these procedures, which contains the HMW protein gene ORF from *C. trachomatis* L₂ and is represented by nucleotides 446 to 3421 in Figure 2.

Recombinants were grown in 2X-YT broth containing 20 100ug/ml Ap to mid-log phase (~0.5 O.D.₆₀₀) and induced with IPTG (1mM final) for an additional 4-5 hours to activate transcription from the vectors trc promoter. Cells were harvested by centrifugation and crude cell lysates prepared by lysis using a French pressure cell.

25 Alternatively, expression of rHMW protein may be obtained by using a baculovirus expression system. Here, the HMW protein ORF from *C. trachomatis* L₂ and *C. trachomatis* F were PCR-cloned as ~3Kbp PCR products into a baculovirus transfer vector (e.g. pFastBacHTb) that had been previously digested 30 to completion with KpnI and treated with CIP to minimize vector religation in essentially the same manner as described for pTrcHisB. The HMW protein expression cartridge generated in this cloning exercise (i.e. the baculovirus polyhedron promoter, N-terminal (His)₆, affinity purification domain, HMW 35 protein gene ORF) was then transferred to the baculovirus genome by site-specific transposition using a commercially available bacmid system (Bac-to-Bac, Gibco)

Briefly, the HMW protein baculovirus expression plasmid was used to transform competent *E. coli* DH10bac (Gibco) cells containing a bacmid (a hybrid baculovirus-plasmid replicon) to gentamicin resistance using standard transformation and selection methodologies. Transformants where the HMW protein expression cartridge had successfully transposed from the expression plasmid to the appropriate receptor site within the lacZ gene located on the bacmid replicon were identified using a standard IPTG/X-gal blue-white selection.

White, Gm^R transformants were picked at random and restreaked for purification. Bacmid DNA was prepared from broth cultures by the method of Ish-Horowitz, N. A. R. 9:2989-2993 (1981) incorporated herein by reference, and is used to transfect *Spodoptera frugiperda* 9 cells. Following plaque purification, recombinant HMW protein baculovirus is used to infect large scale *Spodoptera* suspension cultures. A yeast expression system is used to generate a glycosylated form of HMW protein.

20

Example 10.

Purification of Recombinant Protein

Recombinant HMW protein was purified to homogeneity using standard preparative immobilized metal affinity chromatography (IMAC) procedures. Briefly, an *E. coli* strain harboring an expression plasmid containing HMW protein gene was grown in Luria broth in a 5l fermenter (New Brunswick) at 37°C with moderate aeration until mid-log phase (~0.5 O.D.₆₀₀) and induced with IPTG (1mM final) for 4-5 hours. Cell paste was collected, washed in PBS and stored at -20°C. Aliquots of frozen cell paste (~9-10g wet weight) were suspended in ~120ml of D-PBS by mechanical agitation and lysed by passage through a French pressure cell (2X, 14,000psi, 4°C). Soluble protein was then removed from rHMW protein inclusion bodies by high speed centrifugation (~10,000Xg, 4°C, 30min).

The insoluble pellet containing rHMW protein was suspended in ~20ml of ice cold D-PBS by homogenization and

centrifuged as above. Washed rHMW protein inclusion bodies were then denatured by suspension in a sodium phosphate buffer (0.1M, pH7.0) containing 6M guanidine hydrochloride and loaded onto a Ni²⁺-affinity column (1.5cm X 25cm, bed 5 volume ~15ml) prepared from Fast-Flow Chelating Sepharose (Pharmacia) and charged with Ni²⁺ or Zn²⁺ ions by standard procedures. Unbound material was removed by washing the column with ~5-10 column volumes of a sodium phosphate buffer (0.1M, pH7.0) containing 8M urea.

10 Recombinant HMW protein bound to the affinity resin by virtue of the N-terminal (His)₆ affinity purification domain was eluted using a pH 4.0 sodium phosphate/8M urea buffer (~20ml). Eluted material was neutralized by the addition of 1.0M Tris-HCl (~2.5ml, pH 7.5) and dialyzed 15 against TE buffer containing SDS (0.5%) to remove the urea. Dialyzed material was concentrated using a Centricon-30 centrifugal concentrator (Amicon, 30,000 MWCO) and mixed with a 1/5 volume of 5X SDS gel sample buffer containing 1mM 2-mercaptoethanol (Lammeli) and boiled at 100°C for 5min.

20 Samples were loaded onto Tris/glycine preparative acrylamide gels (4% stacking gel, 12% resolving gel, 30:0.8 acrylamide:bis solution, 3mm thickness). A prestained molecular weight standard (SeeBlue, Novex) was run in parallel with the rHMW protein samples to identify size 25 fractions on the gel. The area of the gel containing proteins having molecular masses of ~50-70 Kdal was excised and the proteins electroeluted using an Elu-Trap device and membranes (S&S) as specified by the manufacturer.

Electroeluted protein was dialyzed to remove SDS. The 30 protein concentration of the sample was determined using a Micro-BCA system (Pierce) and BSA as a concentration standard. The purity of rHMW protein was determined using conventional SDS-PAGE and commercially available silver staining reagents (Silver Stain Plus, Novex) as shown in 35 Figure 4.

The apparent molecular weight of the isolated mature rHMW is about 105-115 kDa as determined by SDS-PAGE.

Example 11.

Preparation of Antibodies to HMW Protein

Polyvalent antisera directed against the HMW protein were generated by vaccinating rabbits with the purified HMW protein or fragments thereof. Each animal was given a total of three immunizations of about 250 ug HMW protein or fragment thereof per injection (beginning with complete Freund's adjuvant and followed with incomplete Freund's adjuvant) at approximately 21 day intervals. At each immunization, approximately half of the material was administered intramuscularly (i.m.) and half was injected intranodally. Fourteen days after the third vaccination a fourth booster of about 100 ug HMW protein was given i.m. and the animals exsanguinated 7-10 days later. Anti-HMW protein titers were measured by ELISA using purified HMW protein (1.0 ug/well) or *C. trachomatis* L₂ EBs (whole and crude protein extracts) as capture ligands. Immunogen specific IgG ELISA titres of 1/320,000 were observed using purified rHMW truncated protein and 1/2500 using either EBs or RBs.

Serial dilutions of antisera were made in PBS and tested by ELISA in duplicate. Goat HRP-conjugated anti-rabbit antibody diluted 1/1000 was used as the second reporter antibody in these assays. Titers are expressed as the greatest dilution showing a positive ELISA reaction, i.e. an O.D.₄₅₀ value >2SD above the mean negative control value (prebleed rabbit sera). Hyperimmune antisera was then used to probe Western blots of crude EB or RB extracts as well as 1.0% OGP EB extract preparations to determine whether other *C. trachomatis* serovars and *Chlamydia* species express the HMW protein. *C. trachomatis* serovars B, F, L₂, MoPn and *Chlamydia pneumoniae* were tested and found to have a protein of an apparent molecular weight of 105-115 KDa reactive with antisera generated against HMW protein.

Example 12

Surface localization of the HMW protein on different *Chlamydia* strains and derivatives were examined by indirect fluorescence antibody (IFA). IFA was performed

using the procedures generally known in the art using hyperimmune anti-HMW protein as the primary antibody. Hak cells infected with whole EBs from one of *C. trachomatis* serovars L₂, B, and F, *C. pneumoniae* or *C. psittaci* are 5 achieved by the following method.

McCoy or Hak cells were grown to confluence in D-MEM media on 12mm plain coverslips inside 24 well tissue culture plates then centrifugally inoculated with ~5X10⁴ inclusion forming units (IFU) of the *C. trachomatis* strain 10 N11 (serover F). After ~24 hours incubation, the culture media was removed and infected cells fixed in methanol for 10 min. The fixed monolayer was then washed with PBS (1X) to remove fixative and overlayer with >300 ul of anti-60Kdal truncated HMWP rabbit antibody that had been diluted ~1/100 15 in PBS. After 1 hour incubation with the primary antibody, the cells were washed gently with PBS then incubated for ~30 min. with a 1/200 dilution of a mouse anti-rabbit IgG antibody conjugated with FITC. The second antibody was diluted using a PBS solution containing 0.0091% Evans Blue as 20 a counter stain to visualize the monolayer. Cells were washed 2X in PBS to remove the secondary antibody, the coverslips removed from the culture plates, and mounted onto microscope slides using a fluorescent mounting medium.

Identical cell samples stained with prebleed rabbit 25 antibody or FITC-conjugated second antibody alone were processed in parallel and served as antibody specificity (negative) controls. Counterstained samples were examined at a 1000-X magnification with a Zeiss Axioskop photomicroscope equipped with plan-neoflur objectives. Results using *C. trachomatis* N11 (F serovar) are shown in Figure 7. The 30 results show that enhanced fluorescence of samples stained with HMW protein antibody compared to the controls confirmed the surface location of the HMW protein. Furthermore, fluorescence of samples stained with HMW protein antibodies 35 show binding to surface localized HMW protein from L₂, B and MoPn serovars and *C. pneumoniae*.

9. UTILITY

The *in vitro* neutralization model has been used to show that protective antiserum inhibited chlamydial infection (neutralization) of various tissue culture cell lines.

5 Animal models are also essential for testing vaccine efficacy with both small animal (non-primate) and primate models necessary for preclinical evaluation. The guinea-pig has been used for studying experimental ocular and genital infection by the Guinea-pig inclusion conjunctivitis agent
10 (GPIC), *C. psittaci*.

The mouse offers a consistent and reproducible model of genital tract infection using human genital tract isolates. This mouse model is a generally accepted pre-clinical assay, and was used to evaluate MOMP as a subunit
15 vaccine. Another model is known as the primate model of trachoma infection wherein the induction of secretory IgA was shown to be a prime component of protection. Vaccinogenic ability of new subunit antigen candidates is determined using the above-mentioned generally accepted *in vitro*
20 neutralization and animal model systems.

Example 13.

In Vitro Neutralization Model

As a preliminary exercise to the animal protection studies, hyperimmune anti-HMW antibody was evaluated for its
25 ability to block the infectivity of various *C. trachomatis* serovars (e.g. L₂, B, E) *in vitro*. Although HeLa cells were used to propagate *Chlamydia*, these cells also allow antibody-mediated uptake via Fc receptors. Therefore, to evaluate anti-HMW antibody inhibition of infectivity, Hak cells, which
30 do not display Fc receptors, were used in these analyses.

Cells were grown on coverslips in 24-well plates to a subconfluent monolayer (about 90% confluence = 1×10^5 cells/ml) at 37°C in 5% CO₂. Anti-HMW-antibody was diluted to about 100 ug/ml (total protein) in sucrose-phosphate-
35 glutamate (SPG) buffer and then serially diluted in SPG buffer. Frozen aliquots of pretitered *Chlamydia* was diluted in SPG buffer to about 2×10^4 IFU/ml. EBs were premixed with

the diluted anti-HMW-antibody to about 10-20 IFU/ μ l and incubated 30 minutes at 37°C on a rocking platform.

Prepared Hak cells were washed in HBSS and then 5 incubated with the anti-HMW-antibody/Chlamydia EB mixture in triplicate for each antibody using 500 IFU/ml. Plates were incubated for 2 hours at 37°C, then the inoculum removed and plates washed 3 times with HBSS. Tissue culture media containing 1 ug/ml of cyclohexamide was added and plates incubated for about 24-36 hours at 37°C in 5% CO₂ to allow 10 inclusion bodies to develop. After incubation, the media was removed and cell monolayers washed 3X in PBS. Plates were fixed in methanol for 20 minutes and re-washed in PBS.

Cells were stained to visualize inclusions by 15 incubating with anti-Chlamydia LPS antibody (diluted about 1:500, ViroStat), cells washed 3 times in PBS, followed by incubation with FITC-conjugated goat secondary antibody for 30 minutes at 37°C. Coverslips were washed, air dried, and mounted in glycerol on glass coverslips. Inclusions were counted in five fields through the midline of the coverslip 20 on a Zeiss fluorescence photomicroscope. Results are reported as the percent reduction of inclusion-containing cells with respect to a heterogenous antibody control (rabbit prebleed sera).

25 Example 14.

Mouse Genital Infectivity Model

HMW protein is evaluated as an immunogen and a 30 vaccinogen using the generally accepted mouse *C. trachomatis* genital infectivity model. HMW protein is evaluated as an immunogen and for the ability to protect BALB/c mice against challenge with various *C. trachomatis* serovars (L, B, E). HMW protein is administered to groups of Chlamydia-free animals by three different immunization routes: oral, nasal and subcutaneous. For each route, the immunogenicity of HMW 35 protein is determined for the protein alone and in combination with an appropriate adjuvant(s). After the first immunization, animals are periodically sacrificed and serum

IgG and mucosal (cervix/vagina and intestinal) sIgA levels determined using well known methodologies.

Immunization of Mice: Six-to-eight week old (sexually mature), specific-pathogen free, female mice are administered 5 with the HMW protein as described below.

For parenteral administration, the classic route for delivering recombinants subunits and toxoids to humans, HMW protein subunit is given subcutaneously to unanesthetized mice. For oral immunization, animals are withdrawn from 10 rations 4 hours before dosing. HMW protein is administered intragastrically to unanesthetized mice. Intragastrically vaccinated mice are returned to solid rations approximately 3-4 hours after immunization. Mice to be vaccinated nasally are sedated lightly, placed on their backs, and administered 15 with HMW protein.

Determination of Serum and Mucosal Antibody Levels:

Beginning immediately after the first immunization and continuing at 7 day intervals thereafter, animals from each vaccination group are anesthetized, the abdominal cavity 20 opened and the animal exsanguinated by cardiac puncture. Immediately thereafter, the lower reproductive tract (cervix and vagina) and small intestine are surgically removed. Mucosal secretions are collected from the intestine and cervix/vagina by gently scrapping prewashed and dissected 25 organs with a sterile scalpel blade. Sera and mucosal secretions are stored in PBS at -70°C until the end of the experiment and analyzed as a group.

Chlamydial IgG and secretory IgA levels in serum and mucosal secretions are determined by ELISA. Titers to 30 both whole EB lysates and HMW protein are determined.

Briefly, intact purified *C.trachomatis* L₂ EBs or HMW protein is diluted in 0.05 M sodium carbonate buffer and used to coat Immulon-3 (DynaTech) 96 well microtiter plates. After blocking with 1% BSA/PBS/0.05% Tween-20 and extensive washing 35 (3X; PBS/0.05% Tween-20) serum or mucosal secretion samples, serially diluted in PBS, are added and the plate incubated at 37°C for 1 hour. All samples are tested in duplicate.

Unbound material is removed by washing. Affinity-purified HRP-conjugated to either goat anti-mouse IgA (alpha chain) or goat anti-mouse IgG (Vector Labs), diluted 1/5,000 in PBS, is then added and the plate reincubated at 37°C for 1 hour.

- 5 Secondary antibody is removed, the plate washed again and substrate (TMB) added.

The color change is measured in a microplate spectrophotometer at 450 nm after a 30 minute incubation at room temperature and quenching with H₂SO₄. Readings >2 SD of 10 the mean negative control value (pooled prebleed sera, pooled mucosal secretions from unvaccinated animals) is defined as positive. Reaction specificity is monitored by preabsorbing the primary antibody with antigen (antibody-blocking) and the secondary antibody with purified mouse IgG/IgA (conjugate-blocking). Antibody titers for each data point (5 animals/point) is presented as the geometric mean ± S.D. of the last positive dilution.

C. trachomatis challenge: Two weeks after the third immunization, animals are challenged intravaginally, while 20 under mild anesthesia, with a single dose of 0.1 ml endotoxin-free PBS containing 10⁸ IFU of purified, pretitered C. trachomatis EBs. Progesterone is administered (about 2.0 mg per dose, i.m.) one week prior to and the time of challenge to block estrous and ensure infection of mouse 25 cervical epithelial cells with human C. trachomatis strains. The presence and persistence of C. trachomatis in the lower reproductive tract of vaccinated animals is assessed using both a commercial Chlamydia-specific ELISA (Chlamydiazyme, Abbott Diagnostics) and by in vitro cultivation. At 7, 14, 30 and 21 days post-challenge, animals are sacrificed as above and their lower reproductive tracts (cervix/vagina) and small intestine surgically removed as above.

Tissue homogenates are prepared by macerating and homogenizing identical amounts of tissue in 1.0 ml SPG 35 buffer. Clarified samples are serially diluted and tested for Chlamydia-specific antigen by commercial ELISA and used to infect McCoy cells grown to about 90% confluence in 24-

well tissue culture plates. Each dilution is assayed in duplicate. After a 24 hour cultivation period, infected monolayers are fixed with methanol and inclusion bodies visualized by indirect fluorescence antibody staining using 5 an anti-Chlamydia LPS antibody. Fluorescent inclusions are counted at a 40X magnification and the resulting titer expressed as the mean number of inclusions per 20 fields. Chlamydia IgG and sIgA levels in the serum and intestine are also determined for these animals as detailed above.

10 Protection is defined as the ability to eliminate or reduce the level of *C. trachomatis* in the lower genital tract.

To determine whether vaccination with HMW protein protects mice against heterotypic challenge, equivalent groups of mice are immunized with the HMW protein and 15 subsequently challenged with either *C. trachomatis* serovar B or E.

Other equivalents of the present invention may be readily determined by those skilled in the art and such equivalents are intended to be included in this invention.

20 The foregoing disclosure includes all the information deemed essential to enable those skilled in the art to practice the claimed invention without undue experimentation. Because the cited patents or publications may provide further useful information, all the cited materials are hereby incorporated 25 by reference herein in their entireties.

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